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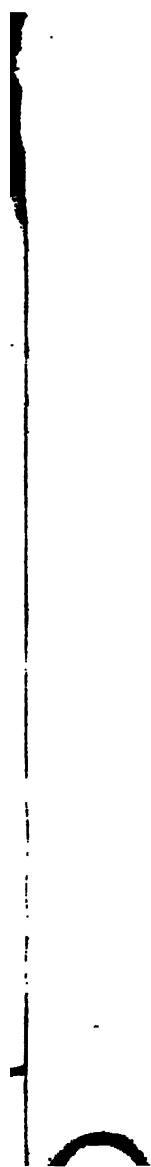
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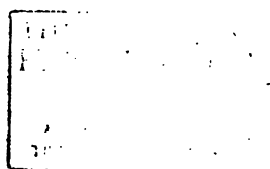
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# The King's Rivals

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# The King's Rivals

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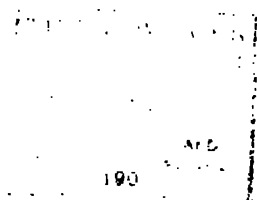
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## The King's Rivals.

### CHAPTER I.

It is a story that I have often told, either in part or wholly, to those who have an interest in my life. But to tell it now, while another sets down the words as I speak them, so that strangers may read what hitherto hath been alone for my loved ones, is a horse of another colour, as the saying goes. From this point of view, it did seem my duty first to relate in order and at a respectful length some of those events which preceded my later adventures, to wit, some small account of my own upbringing, and the way in which I was cast early upon the world with no one to back my ventures. But when I recollect how my youngest grandchild (with whom I sit most cosily) was wont, when I attempted anything like this with him, to cry his wish to skip all explanation and come at once to more stirring times, it occurred to me that his honest opinion might be the echo-starter of other and less kindly criticism, and so, though

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it cost me something to deny myself, yet now I think it matters little. For, before accomplishment, many a thing looks big which shrinks to nothingness when once it is quickly over.

From the hint this small child gave his granddad, then, I have taken my lesson, and in deference to it have condensed into as small space as I am able, all necessary explanation, begging that for this sacrifice of garrulity on my part, in turn I may be granted indulgence for some future faults from those whose eyes may light in kindness upon these words.

It was in the spring of the year 1660 that I, John Hadder by name, being then in the four and thirtieth year of my age, and having a fair amount of prosperity, as the colony understood the word, sailed out of our good Cape harbour, as captain of the fishing sloop "Steadfast," with a figurehead of my own carving at the bow, thirteen men to command (myself took away the curse of numbers), and a goodly supply of spirling and porgies to make things attractive for the cod. It was early in the month of April, but she carried no sign of spring where man could see it. The snow flew briskly as we cleared the harbour, and the men's hands were blue with cold, but we gloried in being the first

off for the Banks, prophesying good luck from the circumstance.

All through that day it snowed as I love to see it when a thick jacket is on my back, and feet and calves are comfortably clad in boots of leather, there being a gentleness about the snow which few things can emulate and fewer still excel. Down upon the decks and rigging it fell that day caressingly, until, as the time was cold and no thawing in the air, there was everything of an indistinct shadowy greyness, and the men's voices came through the frosty stillness as from afar off and sweetened by the distance, while we seemed almost like ghosts walking in a new and fearsome daylight. So quiet a fall of snow was it, with each dainty flake hesitating an instant before mingling its purity with the foaming saltiness of the sea, that while there seemed no way of stopping it for some days to come, it apparently held nothing worse in store for us than darkness in the sky at five in the afternoon, and so I thought to watch it with the peace of mind its quietness engendered.

Yet in this idea, as often happens when men are weather wise and try a peep within that book no man was meant to read, I soon found myself at fault. Toward sundown the great,



soft flakes changed into a blinding sleet of fine and swirling bits of ice, which cut into any bare flesh that lay exposed, like tiny points of steel. It came upon us with the density of a fog, and was accompanied by driving gusts of wind, increasing ever in violence until it reached the magnitude of a formidable gale. By nightfall the sea was running high, and the cold had fallen nippingly over all our little world. Even the men below shivered in their thick jackets, stamping their feet and beating with nerveless hands upon their breasts, while they talked of fires and good cheer at home. And upon the deck the spray half blinded us with the cruelty of the cutting wind and snow combined. Great sheets of ice hung quivering from the rigging, and if by ill luck a sailor's bare hand touched a bit of dripping iron anywhere, when he drew it away as much of the skin as had rested there remained, the parting of it giving him an aching reminder for hours afterwards.

It was just after midnight when, the sea running a thought less boisterously, and myself being at the tiller, the watch sighted a light a little to leeward but, by stretching a point or two, nearly in our course. As we were out of the way of trading vessels and coasters and not yet

within reach of the Banks, it struck me that a ship's light had no right meaning there, so I gave the tiller to my mate, Will Hanley, and went aloft to look at it. At that time my eyes were as good as any telescope (though since then the telescope hath been much improved), and as we had drawn some little nearer even in that short interval, I was able to make out, not a ship's light but a ship afire! I shouted to Will to change the course on chance that we might render some assistance to the poor wretches who were burning no doubt in the midst of that bitter cold, but even as he obeyed me the line of our horizon was illuminated by a tongue of shooting flame, touching with a changing, rosy light the curling crests of a thousand near and distant waves, and marking with hard distinctness the black outline of the water against the colder blackness of the sky. Then we looked gropingly for each other's faces, and saw them white and strained in the pale shadow cast by our ship's lanthorn, and Jack, our throater boy,\* with a scream of terror stood staring with wide, nightmare eyes into the empty darkness of the sea.

\* Throater boy, a ship's boy whose duty it was to cut the throats of the fish preparatory to dressing them.

I shouted a few sharp words to the men (for stupefaction yields to nothing so quickly as to severity; and, after all, lives are lost and lives are gained every hour in the day, though we are not always witnesses), and then I ordered Will to hold the course. For I could not bear to think of fellow creatures adrift in that bitter weather, and wished to keep near the spot where the ship had gone down, on chance that should any of her boats escape, with the daylight we might fall in with them. While the darkness lasted we made short tacks and about ship to tack again, gaining each time a little leeway to allow for the drifting of the boats, and, though numb with cold and clinging with the utmost difficulty to the ropes, I kept watch through all that bitter night. But when the light began to dawn in the far east, and brought no sign of life upon the sullen grey of the water, from sheer necessity I yielded my place to Hanley and went below to see if blood still flowed along my veins. In life no doubt there are worse pains than those which come of bringing warmth into a body whose very heart is chilled, but the sticking of a knife into healthy flesh (and I speak from experience of both extremities) is nothing to it. For an hour after I reached our cuddy I bore

this sore aching with what fortitude a man can summon, and then did a pitiful Providence let me sleep in my bunk until the sun was high. It is safe, I think, to say that no one but a sailor knows the full meaning and luxury of sleep. The breathing of the cold salt air; the hard, unending labor, and the responsibility of the watch; then the warm snugness of the cuddy and the endless swish, swash of the waves about the vessel. All this is a combination that no landsman ever experiences, and a sailor best appreciates when his time for waking comes.

I was aroused by a rude shaking, and Hanley's voice bellowing in my ear something about a boat and rescue, and in a minute I was up and stumbling after him to the deck. The men stood huddled together forward, talking in short, jerky sentences and pointing excitedly towards the south, and so I joined them and looked in the direction towards which their faces turned. Far away upon the water I could make out a tiny speck of black, which kept disappearing at intervals even in the now comparatively smoothly running sea. The wind had shifted slightly, and now came in steadier, though scarcely more gentle fashion from the north-northeast. I shouted to Will Hanley, who was

again at the wheel, to let her fall off a point or two, so that we might bear down upon the bit of wreckage or whatever it might be without delay. Another man I sent below to get out blankets, and Diligence Dawkins, the cook, to his galley to have hot water ready in case it should be needed, while Jack, our throater boy, made room in the crowded cuddy, and the others got ready the boat. Myself once more went aloft where best I could watch proceedings. We rapidly approached the speck, which I presently made out to be a tiny boat, and which, as we drew near to it, I saw still held its passengers. But one figure could I distinguish—that of a man who half lay, half sat in the stern sheets with something white about him. He took no notice of our approach. Indeed his back was toward us as the boat drifted broadside toward the south, and I had not seen him move excepting to sway slightly with the motion of the waves. The men set up a shout as we came nearer, but still he gave no sign, and Jack the throater boy turned white and crouched behind the bulwarks. We came about with a good sweeping curve, and I called to the men to lower the boat. With the tiller ropes in my own hands the men gave way with a good will, and

some half dozen strokes brought us alongside. It was a pathetic sight that met our eyes. In the stern of the little craft lay the figure of as fine a gentleman as ever his Majesty's realms provided. Tall and broad shouldered, he lay there with his fine head covered only with his own hair, and his face turned sadly upward to the coldly staring sky. Upon his chest and hands the flying spray had formed both shield and gauntlets of thin, transparent ice. Only a shirt of cambric, fine and fluted with ruffles of lace, protected his body from the cold, and on his legs were breeches of discolored velvet and silken stockings spoiled by the flying salt. His eyes were wide open and gazing piteously at the reflected blue of the sky. Dainty moustachios and the underlip beard which his late martyred Majesty had affected, curled with contrasting softness about the mouth which now was set in hard and rebellious lines of suffering. Clinging to the gunwale of the little boat we gazed in silence upon this man, who but a few hours before had been like ourselves. What thoughts my mates entertained I cannot tell, but for myself I know that my mind went suddenly back to the old mother I had left so many years ago in Hants, and I wondered if, by any chance,

while she lived she had ceased to pray for me. And then from the bottom of the stranger's boat there came a little moan, and each of my men grunted after me to express weakly the relief this sign of life had brought him. Close to the poor gentleman's side we noticed now for the first time a cloak of fur and velvet, lying curled about some more substantial object which lay quite motionless in the bottom of the boat. Will Hanley put out his hand to pull it aside, but I stopped him shortly for his clumsy way of handling a gentleman's belongings, and myself climbed carefully aboard the stranger. Then, while my men held fast to the gunwale of the boat to keep us from drifting apart, I knelt down and as gently as I knew how pulled back the cloak to see what it was it covered.

At another time and in widely different circumstances, the sight that met our eyes would have raised a laugh among us, but now not an eye twinkled or a mouth corner twitched, though several hearts were stirred to sympathy. For under the fur that had kept his heart still beating, was a boy of some twelve years, as I guessed from his appearance, wrapped snugly in the coat which should have warmed his father. His chubby, child-like face was pinched and blue

with the creeping cold, and tucked about his ears and neck and hanging over his closed eyes was a great periwig of finely curled brown hair. About his feet and legs was wrapped a waistcoat of heavy cloth and fur, and under this his hands were snugly tucked. A queer little man he looked, though with all his chubbiness, from the turn of nose and chin, we easily could see that it was his father who had given up his chance of life to save him.

I took him up into my arms and held him tight against my breast as we rowed rapidly back to the "Steadfast," while Will Hanley clambered into the stranger's boat after we had made it fast to ours, and broke the ice from the poor gentleman's hands and chest and forced a little brandy in between his hard-set teeth. We got them both into the cuddy of the "Steadfast" as soon as we were able, for although I feared all hope of earthly life was over for his father, for the boy I had thought there was some chance, even though any treatment I had been able to give him on the way had aroused no more sign of life than the faint moan which first had brought our attention to him.

But when we had stretched him upon the warm bunk in our cuddy, with his father upon



the table in the centre, we went to work in earnest. I had them strip the poor gentleman of the few clothes that remained upon him, and, although I felt it was useless, rub his stiff and purple body with snow and liquor and ply hot water to his frozen feet. But though his limbs grew limp under the warmth and our exertions, no sign of life could we draw from his quiet heart, and the best we could do for him at last was to draw his eyelids down and straighten him for burial.

## CHAPTER II.

WHEN a man by the grace of God is placed under my command, whether it be upon the sea or fighting against the tribes of hostile Indians for the ultimate good of their souls, in his Majesty's American colonies, or whether it be in any one of those many positions where authority must be assumed by someone and subordination by others endured, there are two traits of character which I pray he may leave behind him. Of these the first is disobedience and the second curiosity.

And so when Will Hanley came below and began to toss about the garments which once had been the unfortunate gentleman's property, and to stick enquiring fingers into pockets of satin, which quickly detected their native roughness, and when, after fair warning from me, he persisted in this low-bred business, and grumbled into the bargain at what he was pleased to term my "notions"; after this defiance of my authority and unseemly haste after knowledge and gain, what could I do but knock him down

with what gentleness the occasion warranted? And though it goes against the grain with me to tell such tales of honest fishermen and sailors (some of whom had served his Majesty in former years), yet must I describe the thing which followed. For Will had no sooner stretched his length upon the cuddy floor than his brother Tom drew his sailor's knife and threatened me with it, at the same time shouting to the others to search the gentleman's pockets for gold and trinkets; and there over that frozen body began a quarrel for which my head bows down in shame. Not one of the men sided with me, and had they all been below, and Will unstunned by the collision of his head against the wood, the affair must quickly have ended in my defeat. But being a tall and somewhat heavy man, yet agile as the best of them and skilled in the art of self-defence, and having God and right upon my side (as well as a great sea-pistol which I had managed to get out of my bunk), I finally came unscathed and triumphant out of the disgraceful affair, and then proceeded to make the men thoroughly ashamed of themselves, but more especially of each other. I drew them up in line with hands behind them, with Will Hanley propped upon a stool in front,

on one side of the poor gentleman's body as it lay upon the table, and standing on the other side myself, I offered to shoot down the first man of them that stirred tongue or muscle while I told them the contempt I held them in.

"To-morrow," I began, "you all will hope that the noise of this will go no further than our cuddy here. To tell the tale at home would be to disgrace the name of seaman, and to give your wives the upper hand of you. Your share in the fish, as in the work, you shall have, but in this unhappy business there is but a single share, and that shall go to no one, while I can prevent it, but to him whose right it is. If you are men you each will help me do my duty."

I then reminded them that but half their work was done, for though the breath of life had passed the father's lips, the little boy, his heir, still claimed our best attention, and asked them were they hounds enough to let a baby die that his pitiful inheritance might fall to them? At this Tom Hanley, who was an honest man when his brother let him alone and he saw no prospect of personal gain or advancement, shuffled his feet uneasily and asked leave to speak.

"I move we stand by the skipper, mates," he said. "There's naught here but a gold piece

or two and a sword we have no use for, and the young 'un be welcome, for all of me, to such like gimcracks."

The others gave a surly assent and hung their heads before me, and I knew they would give me no more trouble.

I proceeded, therefore, to gather together the things which so had tempted them, and to tumble them into my private locker, where they might lie secure until such time as I could permanently bestow them. Afterwards I made a list of them in order that nothing might escape my memory, and this I will here put down to show what was our castaway's estate :

Item. His purse in which were thirty golden guineas.

Item. A sword with hilt set in brilliants, and the letter " S " in red stones.

Item. A ring of emeralds.

Item. A cloak of heavy cloth lined with fur.

Item. A coat of velvet, its color spoiled with sea water.

Item. A waistcoat of fine cloth embroidered with silver.

Item. A periwig.

Item. A pair of leather gloves.

Item. Silken hose, and a cambric handker-

chief embroidered with the letter " S " in each of the four corners.

His shirt and fine linen undergarments we left upon him, after careful examination to see if any marks were on them. But of these or of any sign which might lead to his identity we found nothing whatsoever save the letter upon the sword and cambric handkerchief.

In the meantime, while these sad offices and the disgraceful handling of his father's body were going on, I had kept a watchful eye upon the boy whom it had now become my duty to guard. I had ordered Jack, our throater boy, to strip off his clothing, and even while I was struggling for my right of command, had shouted to him that a rope's-end awaited him if for a moment he should allow curiosity to interfere with his operations. And now that all again was quiet I thrust Jack aside and tried my own hand at restoration. Stripped of his clothing and the periwig which had kept his ears from freezing, he showed himself a handsome boy enough, though a bit too short and well fed for one of what I took his years to be. His skin was fine and white as any woman's, his nails well shaped and cared for, and his hands and feet the smaller counterpart of his father's. His

hair was light in color and cut close to his head, and around his neck, upon a bit of common cord, was hung a tiny ring of gold. His heart still gave that feeble beat, and from time to time he moaned as in the boat, but more than this response to all his effort our Jack could not draw from him.

I turned him over on his side and had them bring me a pan of clean, soft snow. Then with balls of this in my hands I rubbed him until the tender skin grew red with chafing, and when it showed signs of breaking I covered him with melted tallow and smoothed it until the flesh was soft once more. Diligence Dawkins filled our empty pans with hot water and these we piled upon his feet, and from time to time moistened his lips and temples with clear liquor. When no sign of life, save the scarcely perceptible breathing and now and then that plaintive moaning sound, came of our earnest labor, I had them bring in a barrel and fill it with warm sea-water, and into this I lowered him, inch by inch, until the water touched his chin. It seemed grateful to him, for presently he drew a long and trembling breath, and when I once more laid him between woolly coverings upon the bunk he suddenly opened a pair of deep

blue eyes and looked steadily up at me. I laughed aloud in relief to see him so, crying, for want of better words:

"Welcome safe, my dear, among good friends, and may you never want for plenty of them."

He answered nothing nor did the expression of his eyes alter, though they still gazed upward into mine. I was somewhat taken aback at this, but smiled at him reassuringly and asked him if he still was aching. Again he made no sign of answering, and I looked at him in silent fear. Then I moved aside and saw that his eyes were fixed and did not follow me, and knew what a woeful thing had happened.

But once before had I heard of an instance similar and that was long ago, when a woman had been caught out in the black frost upon the Lancashire sands and never had known again that a tongue belonged to her. For the frost, while it had left his body, had taken a cruel revenge upon his baby brain, and now, though his heart beat strongly, his mind was clogged and dead.

I put the men aside and bade them roughly to go about their business, while I paid attention to my own. Perhaps the gruffness of my voice betrayed me, or it may be that their eyes,



too, grew watery at this fresh misfortune, for they obeyed me without a word, and then I began to miss their company. For no matter how a man may think himself constructed to cope unaided with whatever may fall beside him, yet when the time arrives it often finds him sadly wanting. So now, when I was left alone in our little cabin, with that poor gentleman's body lying stark beside me, and the boy's unheeding eyes looking blankly upward, I found myself giving swift glances over shoulder to see what more was threatening. And presently I left the dead alone in occupancy, and wrapping the boy warmly in his covering, carried him on deck to see what the air of heaven would do for him.

This happily proved a blessed thought, for when I had tucked him where the wind was smallest and had talked to him and fondled him, and had Tom Hanley, who was somewhat penitent, whistle bird-notes to him, to make him think, perhaps, of home; after all this, I say, I had the joy of seeing his eyes at first grow restive, and then take on a look of wonder which to see made me laugh aloud in thankfulness.

Then Diligence Dawkins brought around a

great bowl of broth, and I set Jack to feed him what of it the boy's half useless throat could manage. It did us good to see him eating (for he lives who eats), and I stood by and watched the dainty way in which he took his spoonful, opening my great mouth in sympathy until I saw that Jack was doing likewise. I rebuked him, therefore, for such shocking manners, and took away the spoon to give myself the pleasure of feeding my little gentleman. With every drop I saw his chance of life grow brighter, and when he could hold no more (too soon by far I thought, until the memory of his gentle blood came back to me), and began to smile at our clumsy efforts to amuse him, I thought it safe to trust in God to bring about his cure, and to go about a less agreeable business. This was to give his father as near a Christian burial as in our power lay. A sailor's grave was all I had to offer him, but I tried to do my best to make it comfortable. We smoothed him reverently and covered him. A board, a sail-cloth, a bit of rope and sewing, and a weight of white sand, which had come aboard as ballast, at head and feet, was all we could devise for him. Then we brought him quietly on deck. The boy had fallen asleep, but I had Dawkins bring him for-

ward in his arms and hold him, so that in after years he might know that he had been present at his father's burial. I said what prayers I could remember, and then we gave the body into the kindly keeping of the sea. For a moment after the dull splash had fallen we stood looking down in silence, and then, to hearten them, I said:

"Men, our duty to the dead is done, and now begins our duty to the living. We have a gentleman among us, let him never be ashamed of his company! No doubt he will bring us good luck, and in ten days we should be fishing!"

The remembrance of the business upon which they were bound, and which in the past few hours had been somewhat forgotten, cheered them not a little, and first one man and then another came and held out his hand to me in token of his willingness to forgive my discipline. Only Will Hanley hung his head and scowled as he followed the good example the others set him, and murmured in his whining voice, "May the good Lord forgive you, John Hadder, for lifting hand against His servant!"

"I'll take the risk, Will," I answered, cheerily.

And so the mid-day found our course once more set northward, a merry wind astern and a gentleman's son and the few pounds of his inheritance aboard to make us proud of honesty.

### CHAPTER III.

THE sea is like a mother with whom discipline is a word of empty meaning, who, after she has whipped her children from a sense of duty towards them, gives them sweets to assure herself forgiveness.

So on the next morning, to make amend for the hardship she had caused us, the wind began to blow from the south with gentle steadiness, an air that made us think of summer coming, and caught us singing cheerily with jackets open. Quite early the sun broke gleaming patches in the low white clouds and by noon had eaten out the heart of them. So we counted bad weather over and the fish quite ready to be salted. When everything was running smoothly and the sun had warmed the corner I had made soft for him, I went below to wake our little gentleman from the nightlong sleep which had blessed him, and carried him on deck to see if he could tell me anything. For with his poor father's body still in our keeping, and himself so lately plunged into misfortune,

and the frost bothering his young brain, I had hesitated to trouble him with questions, and had looked to it that no one got the start of me. But now that he had slept and smiled good morning when I woke him (though never yet had he spoken to any one), and swallowed the bit of breakfast that I brought him, I thought it high time to learn if he could tell me who it was we had the honor of entertaining. So I placed him where best the sun would warm him and sat myself beside him. But first, to appear neither abrupt nor curious and to make him more at ease among us, I told him who we were and what our business was, and how glad we should be to serve him.

And then, as I finished speaking and was getting my mind about to go upon the other tack, a strange thing happened. For as I paused he suddenly looked up at me with puzzled eyes, and said:

“And who, sir, if you please, am I?”

At first so shocked was I at this forestallment of my own intent at questioning that I could do nothing but look off at the sea and mumble something unintelligible, dreading to meet his eyes and the puzzled pleading in them. For how was I to answer the very question I had

been about to put to himself? How could I tell what I knew when it would but increase his trouble? How describe to him his strange and woeful plight?

I knew not how to conceal the astonishment his question caused me nor my chagrin to find that he looked to me to solve it. What to do was beyond my comprehension, and so, like a fool, I laughed uneasily and looked out to sea, and said:

“The wind is dying.”

For a moment there was a dismal silence, and then I looked at him shamefacedly. His eyes were fixed upon me with that painful look of puzzle in them, and as they met my own the tears welled up and overflowed.

“Something strange has happened to me,” he said, hesitatingly; “I cannot remember things. What is my name, sir, if you please, and what am I doing in this strange place?”

Then down upon the deck I knelt beside him to offer him what clumsy comfort I could summon:

“Don’t vex yourself with thoughts or questions now,” I said to him. “Here are a dozen men to shield you and to fight your battles for you. An English gentleman you are, but of

what estate or further title I cannot tell. It is a thing which matters little for a day or two. A healthy appetite and sleep in plenty are of far more importance. Do not let it worry you; surely a day or two will clear things." Thus I spoke in hope to encourage him, and pulled off my cap as I did so, to show him the respect his blood had doubtless made him used to, and to see if the familiarity of it might not jar his memory. But the puzzled look in his eyes instead grew deeper, and I racked my brains to think what I could do to help his trouble. Suddenly a thought came to me, and I cried:

"Young sir, let me carry you below; I have something there to show you."

But the air and his breakfast had so greatly revived him that he put me aside when I tried to make a baby of him, though God knows his weight was nothing to me, and he would not let me help him more than to lean lightly on my arm as he took his first uncertain steps upon our deck. Tom Hanley, who was at the wheel, quickly caught sight of him and angered me by setting up a cheer, which the others, save alone his brother Will, who still was scowling while he prayed the Lord to forgive me, were not slow to imitate. For I feared this exhibition of



rough good feeling might prove too much for our young gentleman in his weak state, and I would not see him bothered. He seemed in no wise taken aback, however, but smiled and bowed his thanks to them with an easy courtliness, as though he received no more than was his due. Down the companionway I was once more privileged to lift him, for what with the pitching of the vessel and the narrowness of the passage he could not manage it alone, though I found it hard to so persuade him. And then I seated him upon my berth, and one by one took out and spread before him the things which we had taken from his father's body, to see if sight of these would aid his memory. He threw the cloak across his knees and let his hands idly caress the fur, and when I put into them the sword, he half drew it from the scabbard as though its touch were familiar. And then he threw it down, and let a score of gold pieces run unheeded through his fingers and smiled half wearily to see them glisten. Last, I took out the periwig and placed it gently on his head, and as I did so murmured, as his father may have done:

“It will keep out the cold a little,” and tucked the cloak around his knees.

He looked up at me with a strange flash of feeling in his eyes, and then, like the lightning, it was gone almost before existence, and in place of it was once more the look of trouble, and a suspicion of welling tears.

"Why do you show me these?" he asked. "I like the sunlight better." And so I put them back until a better time should come to him, and whistled until the lump in my throat grew less. Afterwards we went again on deck, and I told him stories of the sea, in hope of making his poor brain ride easier, and here, as in many cases when a man tries to do a woman's business, I blundered heavily.

For instead of leading his mind into pleasant places, I must needs begin that story of how the "Jane," ten years before, had taken fire in mid-ocean, and how, after first escaping from the flames, our cook, Dil Dawkins, had tossed about for thirty hours in the sea, with nothing but the grace of God and a spar to keep himself from drowning. And this tale of a burning ship seemed to breed such terror in the boy that it set him trembling like a greyhound in the wind, though he said no word to stop me. When I saw his frightened face and wide staring eyes fixed upon me, I called myself the

senseless fool I was, and shouted to Jack to come and help me amuse his betters. But my young gentleman cried out at me:

“No, no, I want no one to interrupt us;” and so I stumbled on again.

By sundown he was able, through the strength our food had nourished in him, to walk at will about the decks, and even to make his way unaided to the cuddy, though some one stood ever ready to assist him. But although he listened to our talk and answered in his courteous manner when we spoke to him, and sometimes addressed a word or two of his own accord to one of us, still he showed no sign of memory, and I gave strict orders that he should not be further bothered. Sleep and food and warmth I made him take in plenty, for I had hopes that a few days' rest and safety might do much to break the fog that hid his former life.

And so each day we looked for some word that might betray his story, and each day I saw afresh with silent pity how he struggled in secret with his trouble. For a kind of pride seemed to force him to bear alone his strange burden, and so I, too, ~~kept~~ silent; for having so lately come back to life, I could not bear to tell him yet how much he had lost in doing so.

Meanwhile the wind held fair and southerly, and on the tenth day of our young gentleman's life with us, and the fourteenth from home, we came in safety to our destination, and our work began. And it seemed as if, after all, the idea of good luck following with our little passenger was not ill grounded, for in all my experience such a catch of fish had never come my way before.

Now, while prosperity is of wonderful importance to him whose luck it is to have it, yet in my small way of observation I have noticed that no one, save, perhaps, one's mother, cares to hear about it from another. And so, although it had not at first been my intention so to do, I shall abstain from the pleasure it would give me to copy out here that bit of my old log, which tells the number of cod and heavy holibut we took each day. The number of quintals we had salted when July came upon us was enough to make us long for land and the taste of meat again. And when, one night, while even the Newfoundland Banks had a warm wind to cheer us, we shook out our sails and turned her nose toward home, the "Steadfast" would have found it difficult to swallow even so small and slippery a thing as a this year's herring.

Meanwhile our young gentleman had grown in body strong and brown. His father, had he come up from the cold sea to look at him, would not have known him for the small and chubby boy whom his periwig had sheltered. Handsome he was, too, and brave and energetic. For though at first I was opposed, and strongly, to the son of so fine a gentleman soiling his hands with fish, yet when I saw how set his heart was upon doing some share of the work to help us, and that occupation would leave less time for working on his puzzle, I told our Jack to teach him all his little business, and in a day or two was pleased to see that he aspired to less infantile employment.

After a time I told him what I could about his father and the manner in which we had found him, and although his lip quivered as I related what a man had sacrificed to give him life, it was no more feeling than he might have shown at hearing the story of another, for I had long discovered that his heart was tender.

The first thing in his life which he could recall with any clearness was, to my shame, the sound of angry voices in our cuddy, though it was long before I told him the meaning of it.

## CHAPTER IV.

AS I look back upon them, it seems to me that the six years which followed were the most uneventful of my life. It is, indeed, a blessed thing that each season as it dawns brings with it its round of work and pleasure; its set conditions which a man, no matter what his station, is bound to follow and respect. For thus has God decreed that man must live, following the routine mapped out for him, and each year finding variety in the things most familiar to him.

Every spring, as the snow began to thaw and the nearing sun to warm us, we started after cod and holibut, and then came home in time to start again. The autumn caught us still among the fish (though now, stretched headless on the racks with bellies slit, they were preparing for unknown society), and afterwards, perhaps, what time was left we helped a bit at farming.

The boy, my young gentleman, "Hal," we called him—for one night he had cried this name in his sleep, and when I called him so in the morning had answered me quite naturally—

had grown into a man as tall as I was, though with far less breadth of shoulder and more elegance of figure, and while this difference made it useless for him to compete with me in trials of strength, as sometimes he did half laughingly, yet it gave him an air which I never could aspire to. Even while he was growing and losing his roundness as a boy will do, he kept a certain grace and elegance of bearing, a way of wearing his clothes, which told that his blood was gentle.

And all this time he lived alone with me in our little cabin, and I grew to love him as if in reality he had belonged to me. A great pet he was, too, among the women, so that I feared from the way they went on about him that his head must be turned amongst them. I have not yet forgot what happened when Mistress Betty Holmes (who long had had an eye upon myself) came down to meet us when first we brought him home after our famous luck among the fish.

"Ah-h, John," she said to me, before a word about myself, "what have we here, if you please?"

And before I could select the words to answer (for I like to speak with due respect to my subject, if at all), Will Hanley, who was jealous of

Betty's predilection for John Hadder, had in his clumsy, sailor fashion blurted out the whole story, while she listened with eyes fixed upon the boy, as a young woman will. And when he was done she stepped up to my young gentleman, and though even at that early time his head came nearly to her shoulder, tilted up his chin to look at him.

"Have you never seen a woman before, lad, that you look so puzzled?" she asked, and would have bent to kiss the boy; but he took a quick step backwards, and, as if he might be dreaming, snatched off his cap and made her a courtly, solemn bow. Then Betty, without a glimmer of amusement, returned him a sweeping curtsy and said, as if the lad had been our Worshipful Governor, Mister Endicott himself:

"At your service, good sir."

And then she turned to me and began to ply me with questions, as a woman, who stays at home and has no other way of knowing things, will do, while the lad followed her with wistful, questioning eyes, as though he were trying hard to recall where he had seen a petticoat. Afterwards they were much together, and although Mistress Betty was never so at ease with him as she was with me, it was hard to discover



which of us she loved the better. As for the boy's affection for her, it sometimes made me as nearly jealous as a fair man can be. For he would sit beside her as she worked or read to him, as she sometimes did, and would look up into her face with his puzzled eyes for hours at a time, seeming never to weary of it, while he treated her always with a courtliness that was strange to our new-world manners.

All through the six long years no flash of memory had come to him to make a shred of light in the darkness which shrouded his former life. Plain "Hal" we called him, and for a surname when he needed one he made use of mine. At first when we brought him home he had been a nine days' wonder, but as time went on even myself had ceased to speculate much about him, and before the time I tell of had gone by, the talk had died away. Sometimes of a summer evening we got out the clothing which had been his father's, and that himself had worn, and the sword, to look them sadly over. For if they had no deeper sentiment for him, a certain affection accrued to them from the story I had told him, and he grew to reverence their meaning, even while it was unknown to him. Although I made what inquiries I was

able I could learn nothing of any ship bound for our coast which had been lost that year by fire. Nor indeed could His Excellency, the Governor, hear anything to aid us, though he was kind about it, and found by investigation that six small ships which had gone out that year from English ports never had been heard from more. This information, although the names of the vessels were known to us, gave us no clue, for the tiny boat in which my dear young gentleman had come to us had borne the name "Penelope" upon her bow, and no ship of this name was missing.

Often when the thought of what he was perhaps losing by his life with me came more forcibly than usual to my mind, I spoke of taking him to Boston and laying his case once more before His Excellency. But Hal would never, of his own will, have it so, for he accorded with the idea of my often friend and counsellor, Perry White, that in God's good time and manner his memory would be restored to him, and that no good could come of interference.

Meanwhile I had done what I could for him. By frugal living and strict attention to our business (for Hal would not be idle, as a less gifted lad had been content to be), we laid up a few

pounds in case sometime we needed money. We gave no little thought to education, too, and in the long winter evenings spent many an hour in poring over books which soon mastered me but seldom could succeed in beating Hal. Never, indeed, had so fine a scholar visited our humble town as Hal soon showed himself to be. His books alone, by some strange trick of brain, seemed to grow familiar to him, and Master Johnstone, who taught the school that my tithes of fish went far to support, was quickly put upon his mettle to keep in front of him. Indeed, in the Latin tongue and in mathematics, my dear young gentleman in a little time went far beyond his master's knowledge, though no one but myself would speak of it out of deference to Master Johnstone's feelings. But I am a fair man and like to give credit and receive it where credit is justly due. So when the schoolmaster implied that Hal's quickness in Latin led one to suspect that Popery was somewhere, and Hal had come to me with trouble in his heart to know if this could be possible, I put the whole thing down to jealousy, and after giving my opinion of the matter to Betty and Mistress Holmes, her mother (who for some strange reason did not greatly care for me), I

thought no more about it and counselled Hal to do likewise.

But my young gentleman was not so easily appeased. For, after turning the matter over in his mind until I grew afraid from his silence that at last he was growing weary of my company, he announced one day his intention of proceeding forthwith to find out conclusively how his faith was grounded; and though my Betty had instructed him in our homely Puritan belief to the best of her understanding and ability, backed by my own word as surety for the truthfulness of her statements, he now would insist upon going for fuller explanation and argument to Mister Warring, our little adviser in things spiritual. And he came home praying that he might forget his Latin lest so fearful an imputation as that of the seal of Rome should again assail him.

But whether it was that his mind after its one great effort had lost the power of forgetfulness, or whether it is that the good Lord thinks less hardly of his vice-gerent upon earth, the Pope, than do those who scout the Scarlet Woman, I cannot say. Certain it is, however, that Hal's prayer was left ungranted, and that his accomplishment, instead of becoming smaller, grew


exceedingly, for he could not for long leave the books alone.

And so with my dear young gentleman grown to be tall and handsome and well educated to befit his station when he should be called to fill it, and with myself an older man by six sweet years than when he came to let me love him, and being still my own master, though dear Betty had my promise to sometime knuckle under, so, I say, in calm and sweet content, with only these few changes to stir us, we came to the night that made a change of all things for us.

The last night but one of the year 1666 it was, with fitting weather for the year's dismissal. Although but little snow had fallen, a black frost was over everything, so that even to put a stake into the ground, a man must first have used an iron pick. The day had been the Sabbath, and for the greater part of it we had sat with feet and hands benumbed to hear the truth expounded. So now after this spiritual exhilaration we were glad once more, were Hal and I, to sit by Mistress Betty's fire, where the good ground which had so received this scattered seed of truth had chance to thaw and embrace it kindly. Outside, the bitter wind was blowing,

with black clouds rolling up in front of it, so that the fight we had to breast it in reaching our present snugness made us all the more grateful for dear Betty's welcome. On the hearth in front of Hal two great winter pippins were roasting in the ashes, and at my feet some more were holding conversation with them. A jug of cider, spiced and burned as only Betty knew how to coax it, stood on the bench between us, while she and Hal and I agreed that we would not mention its presence to Master Warring. For a man's body, alas, needs nourishment upon the Lord's day as well as upon the days that belong more especially to ourselves, and a bit of spice hurts no one.

Seated so with Hal beside me, and Betty flitting here and there to listen while I gave them the benefit of my older opinion upon the way the world was running, I was as well content and happy as a man may be, and we paid at first but scant attention to the growing fierceness of wind. But when nearly a bushel of damp soot fell down upon our apples, filling Betty with dismay for the amount of cleaning it would necessitate, and when outside there was a wild shriek and a howl and then a long whir-r-r, as if a batch of new and unbroken winds had been




let loose upon us, Hal said he thought it justifiable to interrupt my teaching and went to see what he could do about it.

There is a spirit of mischief in the wind, an inconsistency of purpose, which reminds me much of Betty's mother, though I try never to let her see it. For instance, why should she have begun, after some years of fishing for me (though dear Betty herself, I admit, had no part in the expedition save what her heart engaged in)—why should she have begun, I wish to know, as soon as I was safely landed, to nag at me about my young gentleman, and the money I had been able to save for him, and even to manufacture tales against my character?

So now when Hal cautiously lifted the latch, before he could prevent it the wind with a howl of triumph had sent the door flying open to its widest, and had flounced in with little regard to invitation. And then, not knowing how to behave in such well-bred society, it made an anxious rush for escape by way of the chimney and brought down a bushel more of soot.

It took the two of us to close the door again and help Betty and her mother in their onslaughts against unwelcome soot and ashes, and then, as we were settling quietly again to our



enjoyment, there came a heavy knocking at the door. We made out also the sound of voices, and as Hal and I went once more to measure strength against the gale, Dil Dawkins shouted through the cracks:

"Are ye there, man?" and then came a jumble of words in which I could make out only something about the sands and breakers and work to do. So I shouted back a promise to be with them and Hal went to fetch our caps. I hastily kissed dear Betty good night as she sometimes let me do, while Hal cautiously unlatched the door and I stood behind it as he slipped out and Betty held it for me to follow.

Outside there were perhaps a dozen men with lanterns. Three or four of them had already started to push their difficult way in the teeth of the gale towards the beach. Tom and Will Hanley with two or three others were huddled together in the lee of the house, trying between them to keep away the wind while a lantern, which had gone out, could be relighted.

"What's wrong, lads?" I cried.

"An Englishman driving ashore, man," shouted Will Hanley in my ear; "didn't ye hear the signals?"



Now, seeing that I had been so snug beside my Betty's fire, which roared enough in itself to drown all ordinary sounds, while the noise the wind was making would have almost deadened the report of a cannon a hundred yards away, it could not be counted strange that the signals of a ship a mile beyond our haven had failed to disturb us. Therefore I scarcely relished Will's question, which seemed to imply a willingness on my part to shirk my duty.

"Do you think if I had I would sit still and leave a ship to a lubber like you?" I shouted at him.

But while I waited for his answer Hal suddenly put his arm through mine, and, spinning me around, set off at what pace he could, with myself an unwilling craft in tow, towards the beach.

I thought to myself that I would scold him afterwards for his interference in things that concerned him not, little thinking how circumstances were conspiring to take away my opportunity. Bending nearly double with our heads to the wind like sheep, we managed to make good headway and kept falling in with small knots of men, and some women, too, whose destination was our own. Upon the broad

sands we found collected nearly a hundred people, their faces showing pale and strained in the dim light of the lanthorns as they stood looking out to sea. But Hal, with his usual impatience, would not allow me to stop and discover what was the popular opinion, nor would he give me a chance even to offer mine, but hurried me along to where a small group of sailors stood upon the very edge of the black water. As my eyes grew more accustomed to the darkness, and the white light which a sailor always sees in the darkest sky became more visible, I was able to make out what it was they were watching. Not two hundred yards away a noble ship lay pounding heavily on the bar, while each moment over her wounded side the breakers thundered to show the contempt they had for man's devices. A gallant ship she looked even now in her great trouble, for though we could hear her groans and dismal wailings, still could we see that through it all she was behaving bravely. Her mainmast was gone, and by the sounds which the wind brought to us we knew that her crew was busy cutting away the mizzen. Now and again the high, long screams from a woman's despairing throat came to us only to be lost in the hoarser cries of the men.

On shore our own men were fumbling aimlessly with a boat.

"It will not live a minute," cried Hal. "It is a line they want. Give it to me! Here, man, around my waist—off with the boots—be quick about it, ye lubbers!"

For a moment I scarcely comprehended what it was he intended, for hitherto myself had given the word of command while he had been content to follow, as a younger and less experienced man should do. But when his idea flashed over me, I was upon them with as much ferocity as the gale itself expended.

"Would you let a boy do this, you cowards!" I shouted at them, and then, as Will Hanley began to strip Hal's coat from off him, before I knew what I was doing I had felled the man to the ground, where he dropped softly and thought the wind had struck him. Then I put out my hand to seize the rope they were fastening around Hal's young body, and as I did so I met his eyes. There was a look in them which I had never seen there before, and somehow my hand came back to me without having obeyed my firm intention. The next minute my dear boy had grasped it in both his own.

"John," he said to me, while the wind seemed

to lose its violence for the moment to hear his tender words, " Dear John, you have been good to me, may God reward you for it; and again you are good to me in not trying, as you wished just now, to stop me. These men have all some kin to mourn for them if anything should go wrong, but I have only yourself and you have Mistress Betty. God bless you, John!"

I tried to speak to him, but he was gone. And then began a struggle of which I can recall but little. For being a man and hoping that Betty would get over it if anything unfortunate should occur, what could I do, when my dear boy was struggling with such bitter danger, but risk all things to help him? And if he was the first to reach the dying ship it partly was because his start was better. Such an experience I hope the Lord has not in store for me again, for it must be a better man than I to stand the repetition. Once more did Hal prove that gentle blood, with the courage of generations in it, is of more avail in time of need than is the mere brute strength I boasted. For when they drew him up to the deck he still had breath to give a word of cheer and encouragement to the poor sailors, while I could do no more than get a drop of liquor inside me.

Only a few of the things that happened can I recall with any clearness, but one of the most pitiful was the way in which that crew of hardy seamen fought (when there were women there to see) as to which should have first chance of safety. I remember that two of the women flung themselves with despairing appeals at Hal's feet and prayed his strength to aid them, while a third stood lashed to the cabin stairs, and watched what went on about her with head held high and face pale with the hearty scorn she felt for her fellows. And I remember how she said to me when I went at last to help her:

"Attend first, sir, to those poor cowards. From the fear they show of losing them, their lives must be of value. I am content to wait my turn."

With the aid of the captain, who was a brave and generous man, and the last to leave the ship, I persuaded her that her turn had come, and the next thing we were all ashore again after another mighty struggle with the surf, and a dozen men were helping this woman (whose body had succumbed somewhat but whose spirit still was strong) as well as my weary self toward the light that gleamed from Betty's window.

And as we slowly made our way, the gale

howling fiercer still behind us after being deprived of its prey, there rose above it all a clear, piercing voice, speaking to me out of all that company—the voice of my dear young gentleman, my boy, my Hal, to tell me that all again was safe! And in thankfulness I used my remaining strength to answer him.

## CHAPTER V.

IT is strange how easily the mind, although it is the stronger part of man, will sometimes adapt itself to conditions of the body; how when physically weary one may look a great happening, whether for good or evil, in the face with no more than a quiet smile.

So now at first when my boy's safety was borne in upon my mind, though I answered him instinctively, yet my chief thought was to wonder why the woman I still made pretence of supporting had given suddenly a start, the violence of which had communicated itself to me, and then held up her head to look about her.

"Who was it spoke?" she said, and I answered "Hal."

"And Hal? Who is Hal?" she persisted, shaking herself free from my weakened grasp, for a floating spar had left impression on my head as we came ashore and made me giddy. But I drew myself up and answered her as firmly as my condition would allow:

"Hal is the son of an English gentleman,

madam, who died himself to save his boy from freezing."

A strong hand caught me by the arm and prevented me from falling, as I was weakly minded to do, and I looked down at it stupidly. A gentleman's hand it was, long, thin and shapely, though brown with weather; Hal's hand. When I could steady myself to look up again, I saw the lady standing before me gazing fixedly at something over my shoulder. Then in a moment she turned away, and when we went on again, in some strange manner Betty was there beside me in her place and Hal's arm under mine still was keeping me from reeling. Afterwards there was darkness for me and the sound of many voices round about, while someone fumbled with my hair: and the next thing the sun was shining and in my eyes a cruel pain twisted, while Betty's mother stood beside me as I lay upon the bed.

"Much must you love my child, John Hadder, to go risking the life you have offered her for the first bold woman you come upon!" were the words with which she saw fit to greet my returning consciousness. Now I put it to any fair-minded one, be it man or woman, whether a man just coming from a stupor, with cruel



pain in his half-blinded eyes, and head swathed in linen—whether any man, I say, in such predicament, could be expected to find ready words with which to defend his character? I at least was unable to think of any way in which to settle her, so I said the first thing that came into my head, and this was, “Where is Hal?” But I saw, as soon as ever the words had left my mouth, that this was as false a move as I could have made, for she turned on me in a fury.

“Ay, Hal,” she cried. “Your first thought is Hal! Much you love my Betty. Hal, indeed! Do you think he will ever look at you again, now that his crazy head has a new bit of nonsense in it? Well, you’ve brought him up, John Hadder, whoever he may be! Such airs! My soul, you’d think he was the king himself to hear him! ‘Stay with John till I come back, and be kind to this shipwrecked lady,’ says he. I tell you, man, she shall not stay in my house!”

As she spoke the door opened quickly and there was the brisk soft swish of a skirt as some one rapidly entered and crossed the room.

“Your hospitality I shall not claim for long,” said a voice unknown to me, “but for the mo-

ment I ask your patience, good Mistress Holmes. I have various matters to discuss with this poor sailor, for which, I beg you, leave us alone and see that no one disturbs us!"

Now, then and there I made a mental vow that I never again would shrink before my Betty's mother, and somewhat of the fear and deference with which she had ever inspired me were transferred in that same moment, I believe, to the owner of the voice which so had dared and routed her. And I must add that it concerns no one how often I may have broken my vow. Not only did Mistress Holmes offer no word in defiance or reply, but she dropped, as I saw with my own eyes, an humble curtsy, and passing from the room closed the door with no more than a gentle bang behind her.

I made an effort to turn and pay my duty to my new visitor, whom as yet I had not seen, but at once a firm hand was placed upon my shoulder, and I sank back again in obedience to its order. For to every man I believe is given sometime a woman whom perforce he must love, and often, for his sins, another whom he will fear and perchance unconsciously obey, though until now but the first had been my happy portion.

Without removing the restraining hand from my shoulder the owner of it turned from her position at my bed's head, and placing her other hand upon my chest leaned close and looked me deep into my eyes.

"You are as honest as God made men," she said, and stepped back into the light.

A sigh of relief escaped me as though an ordeal were over, and for the first time I saw my visitor.

Describe her I shall never attempt to do, save perhaps in fragments as it may become necessary, for as a whole no one but a painter could give a right impression. At the moment, as she stood looking down at me, she was nothing but the beautiful embodiment of the courage which had braved my Betty's mother, and now by a something in her eyes held me willingly submissive to her will. Long afterwards, even when I learned the right of things, I never could muster all the scorn I wished to feel for her while her eyes were on me, and I was always braver when she stood not near me.

There were stools in the room, but the lady exhibited first to me then her habit of holding herself poised lightly but steadily upon her feet, during moments of import or excitement, and

as she stood thus gazing down at me I felt how helpless was I before her.

Neither tall nor short was she, but of a carriage that made one who saw her thus suddenly, feel that she overtopped himself, no matter how well grown a man he might be. Her face still held the pallor of her shipwreck, and the natural brilliancy of her eyes was intensified somewhat, no doubt, by the slight hollowness that was about them.

What was the rightful color of her eyes I never knew. Sometimes, afterwards, when she talked to Hal (or that other one) I saw them dusk and purple with tenderness; sometimes, when alone with me, they flashed with the cold grey of a duellist's steel, or gleamed with lights of green and black alternately; once I saw them yellow like a hungry cat's. But that, again, was afterwards. Now, as she gazed at me, they were half veiled with the luxury of lashes, and I was content to lie quite still.

"You are as honest as God made men," she repeated. "Yesterday you saved me from drowning. I thank you for it, because I do not wish to die. If you will be frank with me I may perhaps repay you something of what you have done." She paused to give me time to reply,

but I could think of nothing to say, so waited her pleasure in silence.

"You have a boy called Hal. Tell me about him."

Still I could say no word, for the bluntness of her question scattered my wits even further. What had she to do with Hal?

Grown weary with my slowness, the lady gave the coverlid of my bed a little twitch, and lifted her head impatiently.

"Speak, man!" she cried. "Did you lose your tongue last night? I can recall well the heaviness of it then! Let me hear! What of this Hal?"

"Madam," I stammered (for on my life I could think of nothing else)—"Madam, I love him."

She flashed a look of angry scorn upon me, and then perhaps some memory came to her, for her face softened and for a moment she was silent, turning away her eyes. When she turned to me again I noticed how softly the dark waves of hair framed her face.

"I see," she said more quietly, "I must turn catechist and exercise a virtue which I cannot claim largely to possess. Pray do not fear, Master Hadder, that I design evil to your Hal;

what I wish is to aid him—and you. You were brave and kind last night. It is my wish to return some kindness. Somewhat I think I may know of this Hal. But I must know more than he will tell me, for he will not speak without your knowledge. Your pretty Betty” (how had she so soon learned that? I wondered) —“your pretty Betty hath told me some small part of his history. But I would know more. The young man is not of your blood?”

Remembering how my first few words had made her look in greater kindness on me, I again replied in the same way by saying:

“No father, madam, could have a greater love for son than have I for Hal!” But this time, such is the changefulness of woman’s mind, my words only moved her to impatience.

“Grant that,” she said, sharply. “Let us come to the point. Tell me, has the boy a drop of your blood in his veins?” And I answered simply the truth, which was that I did not know.

I could see nothing in that to make her angry (for though I had never thought of it before, how was I to know to a certainty that my own sister, who had died some fifteen years ago in

London, had not brought Hal into the world?), but she threw a look at me that sent a chill along my spine, although with a visible effort she controlled her voice.

“Pray, my brave captain, let us have no more dallying! Tell me, what is this boy’s rightful name?”

Again I told her shortly that I did not know, for in some way I had a distrust of her and something held my tongue as long as my wits were still about me. The lady, after a moment’s silence, during which she looked thoughtfully down upon me, let a little laugh escape her which sounded for all the world like the dancing of a brook in May, and then she came and sat upon my bedside. With a hand that was cool and very gentle she smoothed back my hair and eased my bandages, while she looked at me and smiled. How it happened I cannot tell, but presently, as it seemed with scarce a question asked, or answer given, but with a manner of conversation which was strange to me, she began to draw from me all I knew of Hal and of his poor frozen father.

All, I told her, from the very beginning until the time she knew of, omitting not one jot of incident or item of property preserved, though

why I did so far from my intention, was even then a mystery to me. When I had finished she said nothing in words, but for an instant again laid her cool white hand upon my burning head, and for that space of time, to my shame now I confess it, I forgot my Betty, Hal, and all the world. But when she had left the room and the door was closed upon her, a great wave of fear and distrust and rage swept over me, and with a mighty effort I struggled to my feet and screamed aloud for help, vainly trying to catch the door as it circled swiftly round me.



## CHAPTER VI.

WHILE a man lies all day on his bed (which no man was meant to do) there are but three lines of thought of which his brain is capable. Either he will weakly consider himself of paramount importance to those whose duty it is to humor him, and so become an object of pity and sometimes of contempt to them; or else he will lie and plot great schemes of good or evil, grumbling to be interrupted; or else he will call himself a fool.

Sometimes no doubt a mixture of all three results, but in my case, while I lay the next three days, I lost no time in doing anything but the last. Why had I, so all night I asked myself and all day strove to answer—why had I allowed myself to be so dryly pumped for nothing in return? Why had I told a stranger the sweetest story of my life? Like a fool I had answered her when she smiled at me; like a knave I had betrayed my boy into this woman's hands! And yet what it was I feared I cannot say. What she had learned of me was common

property enough. Had I kept silent, a dozen might have given her the information she sought. Even Hal himself and Betty had already told enough to prohibit concealment of the rest, even if I had been able to keep my counsel. And again, why should I wish to keep it? Did this lady know anything of my dear boy's birth and parentage, for what reason should I not coax her to reveal her knowledge? What right had I to distrust her? I asked myself; yet all my argument could not avail to still my uneasiness. An idea had gained possession of me that harm would come of it, and shake it off I could not. Perhaps my greatest matter of regret lay in having told her so minutely concerning the "relics," as Hal and I had dubbed the things of his father's, which were left to him. A year before we had taken these things ourselves to Boston and had placed them for safer keeping in the hands of our Worshipful Governor. No one but ourselves knew of this and no one but ourselves had seen them for many a day. For we had grown to look upon them as a sacred trust to be used upon the day in which the good Lord saw fit to give Hal back his memory, if so it should please him ever to do. Until then we had agreed between us that

no eye should look in curiosity upon them, no prying hand should desecrate this heritage. And so His Worship had sealed them, until Hal or myself should demand that the seal be broken.

And now all this I had confided to a stranger, and to a stranger who would have her way with things, wherever she wished to have it.

For three days I lay and tossed, my folly aggravated sore by fever and my mind wandering, so that I minded no more my Betty's tenderness than I did her mother's frowning; and on the fourth morning I lay still and shivered. The sun was shining on the snow that lay along my window ledge, playing with elusive shadows upon the white wall above me. Upon a stool beside me, his head leaning back against the wall, sat Hal asleep. A handsome picture did his well-knit body make against the whitewashed background, and my heart grew still and peaceful as I looked upon my boy. No man seeing him so could find it in his heart to do him injury, much less then could a woman wish to harm him. His attitude was one of great weariness. Not for the kingdom would I have disturbed him, but for company and the bond between us, I put out my hand and laid it gently upon the skirt of his coat where it fell away

from him. Once Betty came to the door and looked in upon us, but I signed to her to make no noise and she blew me a kiss and nodded. I know not how long we stayed like this, but I grew ever more calm and restful; and when the sun, after playing bo-peep with all his buttons, finally climbed up and kissed Hal's lips and eyes and rested lovingly upon his fair hair, my fears had wholly been forgotten, and I laughed aloud to see the surprise of his awakening.

Then I roared for Betty, and she came blithely to see me in such cheer, while Hal rose sheepishly to his feet and laughed himself to keep us company.

"A breakfast for two, my dear," I cried, "and only see that there be plenty! Faith, I've had nothing to eat for the space of a governor's holiday!"

So Betty laughed, too, and ran to fetch some prodigy of her cooking, while Hal's fingers stole upward to his tumbled hair to smooth it.

With what appetite I ate my breakfast shall not go upon record, but I will say that Betty's mother stood agape to see me, though she said nothing, for which I thanked her inwardly. When my plate at last was empty, Hal helped my buttons find their places, and once again my

legs supported me, if weakly, and a pipe was between my teeth. Being cosily ensconced in the chimney-corner, beside a blazing fire, I bade Hal come and sit beside me and tell why all this time since that fearsome night he had not been near me until now.

"John," he answered, gravely, "strange things have been happening to us. I have much to tell you."

"Aye, aye, Hal," I answered easily, "concerning a certain lady no doubt. She hath tried to question me somewhat, but I do not fear her." Here I paused and turned half around to see who had moved behind me, but only Mistress Holmes sat there winding the flax upon her wheel. So I chuckled to think how another woman had put this one to flight, and nudged Hal playfully, and winked and whispered, still with an eye behind me.

"A brave lady, boy, a brave lady it is indeed! And what more of her?"

Now as I said this a light sprang suddenly like the birth of a new day into Hal's eyes and he leaned towards me, his lips parted in an eager smile and his breath coming quickly. Again that almost forgotten spasm of fear and foreboding clutched my heart, as I looked at him,

and forgetful of all, of Betty's mother, of myself, of any who might hear or heed, I leaned forward and placed a heavy hand upon my dear boy's knee.

"A brave lady, Hal!" I cried aloud. "A brave and cold and treacherous! I like her not, Hal, I like her not! Take care!"

We looked into each other's eyes, and my heart contracted suddenly to see in Hal's, for the first time in all our intercourse, a look of angry interrogation, of distrust almost for me who loved him so. And then he drew away and the corners of his mouth curled proudly downward.

"Be not a fool, John," he said curtly. "Brave she is beyond all question. She put every man to shame in the wreck that night, God knows. But what more you have called her is not the truth. A kinder lady never was, and one more anxious to serve a fellow man, as you will admit when I tell you all, John."

From the tail of my eye I caught a smile of interest upon the lips of Betty's mother, so I moved closer to Hal and signed to him to speak more quietly under the whirr of the spinning-wheel.

"This lady hath told me, John," he said with

dignity, " how she went to you to ask your aid in doing me a service, and how, for some strange reason, at first you did not trust her. A kinder lady never lived, nor does anyone, saving yourself alone, to whom I owe more duty. For it seems that in my mad exercise of body, while I toiled and strained and buffeted with wind and wave, and man and woman, too, that dreadful night, my mind in some way loosed itself for the moment from its long captivity, and went back to that other wreck you know of. In my strange state then, while I realized only the mightiness of physical strength and effort, I screamed aloud some words, a frantic cry of terror for the cold sea; an appeal for help and comfort, as a child will call to his father for human aid; a wild cry for something—I know not what or why! Now again, I remember nothing of it all, but it seems this cry of mine was borne by Heaven to the ears of this dear lady, John, and so when she found herself ashore and safe once more she looked at me. Something there was she says in my face and manner, but more than all in my voice perhaps, that stirred her memory, and so she looked the more and pondered. Finally, when she had thought it over, as it satisfied her to do before going

into action, the lady approached our Betty, and from her learned enough to make her look towards headquarters. To me she would not come at first, because in the kindness of her heart she was loath to raise hopes which might prove false. Who then, John, was there left to question but yourself? To you she came, therefore, as soon as you were conscious from your hurt again, with what success you know of; though how you could so treat a lady, who came but with kind intention, is more than I can fathom. She told me how you seemed at first to distrust and then to be suspicious of her, and this was not like you, John. It was no doubt your injury that got in your head and made you irresponsible, although there is one " (and here my boy glanced over shoulder at the spinning-wheel), " there is one, John, old man, who says it was because you fear to lose me; but that fear, did it exist (and I know it does not), is one that hath no bottom. Whatever may be my rightful name and station, in all good that may accrue to it, your share is like with mine, and that you know, and nothing but the Lord shall part us! Together we were brought, together we shall stay, but meanwhile a man must do his duty. When this kind lady



came and told me that she suspected some knowledge of me, and begged to see the things my father had upon him, how could I refuse her great kindness? I came a dozen times that day to ask your opinion of it, but you lay in your bed and tossed and raved of wrongs and treachery and I know not what. I begged a day or two in which to get your opinion, but my lady, for some reason, seemed only desirous of getting back to England, and first to see our 'relics.' There seemed but a week in which to settle it, therefore, as the 'Queen' was sailing for Portsmouth at the end of that time and this was the lady's only sure chance of re-embarking for a time indefinite. So I left you to Betty's care for a day or two, feeling sure that you would approve my course. Together we set out for Boston in company with the captain of the wreck. His ship had been the 'Fearless' from Portsmouth, with some thirty men and women for the Colony, and with him and some ten survivors we set out in Tom Hanley's coaster, and a fair wind blew us into Boston Harbor soon after sunset. The captain of the 'Fearless' took my lady to Mister Carter's house for shelter during her stay, and from here she sent me that very night to see His Excel-

lency, the Governor, and to fetch the things to her that she might inspect them without delay.

“ I had the luck to find His Excellency, but I had also no little difficulty in establishing my identity to please him, for Governor Endicott had either neglected to explain our business to his successor or else Mister Bellingham’s memory is as short as his temper. However, he finally sent a man to rummage for our property, who after a long delay came back with it. That my lady would not consent to accompany me to His Excellency’s house and so save much valuable time and trouble, I had thought a somewhat curious circumstance. But I had no right to question her, and told the Governor as she bade me, that one who could perchance throw light upon my story desired to look at these things of my inheritance. To him no doubt it was a matter of little interest, and to be disturbed in the late evening by so small a thing was an incident he did not relish; yet he wished in all things to be just and honest and secure, so that, when I departed with the sealed packet in my possession, he sent one of his own men along with me to see that I had made no misrepresentations, and to return the packet to his keeping within an hour. For it was only under

these conditions that His Excellency would allow me to take my property, until such time as he could investigate the matter and be assured that his trust was rightly kept. As soon as I could get away I bore the things with what speed I could to Mister Carter's house, where I found my lady awaiting me with much impatience. She hurried me to a room apart, and I broke the packet open and spread the things before her. Time and moths have played a little havoc with my heritage, John. I opened first the coat and cloak, and spread them on my knees and pointed to these ravages with sorrow, but the lady, of course, could have none of that reverence for them which was mine by right, and perhaps for a moment, until I thought of this, I was hurt a little at her want of feeling in tossing them aside.

“‘Not these, not these!’ she exclaimed. ‘Any gentleman might have worn them! Let us waste no time with trifles! Show me the sword!’

“I laid it reverently upon her knee, and as her eyes lighted upon the hilt a little cry escaped her. She snatched it up and carried it to the window, where the light was still struggling, and muttered some words which were not for

me to hear apparently, for she did not repeat them, though she must have felt my eager waiting. I watched her take from her bosom a handkerchief which our Betty had lent her, and breathing upon the hilt and blade where they came together, rub it swiftly, and breathe and rub again, and gaze and murmur until the light had failed. Quite forgetful of my presence did she seem (which again for an instant hurt me until I saw more clearly how great her interest was), and when finally she turned about and caught my staring eyes fixed steadily upon her, she started violently as if surprised to find herself not alone. But in a moment she had collected herself, and, smiling upon my impatience, she came to me holding out her hand.

“ ‘See, Master Hal,’ she said, ‘here is my hand to kiss. Now show yourself the gallant gentleman that I hope to prove you in birth and title, though plain Hal thou art to-day.’ ”

“ I know not what impelled me, John, but something surely did so, to bend my knee before her, as I covered her hand with kisses, and as I knelt thus, she laughed softly to herself and touched me lightly on the shoulder with my father’s sword.

“ ‘Arise—’ she said playfully, while my heart

leaped to my throat, and then she paused suddenly and turned aside. 'Nay, Hal, I must not say it yet,' she said, and then in the silence the sword fell with a clang to the floor and she laid her hand roughly upon my head, pushing it back until my eyes met hers.

" 'Take care, boy,' she said, 'take care! Think not too much of this. False hopes have arisen before and died in time. True hopes that might have been have come and gone and left no mark. Perchance you are happier now as Hal. Look well to it and counsel lest you would withdraw when it becomes too late; and beware, beware lest you hope too much! More than this I must not tell you until the truth be fully known. Yet curb thy hopes, lad, and trust but little in man and less in woman! And now let us pack these pretty keepsakes that you may take them back again to old Dick Bellingham, and then come here once more.'

"I would have clung to her hand a sweet moment longer, to assure her that with what she had told me I was content and would ask no more of her until the full time to reveal it should come; but she drew away and signed me to obey her. So I picked up the sword from the floor where it was lying, and she assisted me

in putting the things once more into their bundle, and then I went out and found the Governor's man awaiting me in the hall below. Sometimes, John, since the other night, my head has a trick of going dazed and heavy, so that it seems not to belong to my body at all, but to wander softly by itself and so behold things strange to me at other times. So now, as I walked beside Governor Bellingham's man, the babble of his incessant talk fell without meaning upon my ears, though he did not seem to notice my silence. I thought I was living over again the hour through which I had just passed; I seemed to feel a hand set impetuously against my head; to hear words that were full of warning mingled with soothing words of hope. There were strange eyes blazing through the darkness, changing, as I strove to locate them, into tongues of living flame, which licked about me until they seemed to burn; and through it all there came a voice, a voice that was strange and yet strangely familiar, bidding me be of good cheer and courage. It was the voice that had come to me, to give me strength and hope to do my battle with the waves that night of the wreck, when this lady was also sent to aid me. I fancy it was my father's voice, John,

but I can only guess at it. When it ceased and my head grew clearer, again a deadly cold came over me, and I stumbled until my companion put out a hand to save me from falling. I was myself again now, and found that the Governor's godly servitor had been reading me a sermon regarding the ease with which young men are led to sin by wine and women, and I marvelled at the patience with which I must have listened to his insolence, and had then and there had it out with him had we not at that moment arrived at His Excellency's house.

“ His worship received me the second time in even less good humour than at first. I suppose that his gouty foot was almost unendurable, for he kept tapping the floor with his stick, his whole body twitching with pain, while he swore at me for keeping him so long in waiting. He would listen to no explanation from me, but bade me roughly to be gone, saying, with many pious oaths, that when I came again for my property I should take it away for good. So thinking it best to answer nothing, I made my duty to him and to his lady who sat with him, and who smiled kindly at me with her eyes, and motioned me not to mind. As quickly as I could then I made my way back to the house

wherein my lady was lodged, to learn what further commands she would have for me. But here I was greatly disappointed to find that she had gone already to bed, having left word for me that I should immediately seek out Tom Hanley, and engage his boat to take me early in the morning back to my home alone. But first, with the earliest streak of dawn, I was to come to her.

“ Long before the time I was abroad (for I had lodged with Tom at the common tavern), and, while he went to make the boat ready for our passage, I made my way through the quiet streets to Mr. Carter’s house. I had waited but a half hour or so, John, when she came out wrapped in the cloak our Betty had provided her, and my heart gave a leap for pleasure to think that after all she was to share my journey. It was a great disappointment then for me when she checked my impetuous welcome coldly, not even giving me the solace of her hand.

“ ‘ Young sir,’ she said, crisply, ‘ if you have the pride of blood and race in your veins, and the perseverance of it as well, you will lose no time in dawdling. Three days from now a ship will sail from this wretched town for England, and I, as she leaves the harbour, shall stand upon



her deck to look my last upon this land. If you will, you may stand beside me, taking thereby the first step towards regaining your name and fortune. But first you must obtain full control of those things I saw last night, and to satisfy His Excellency, it seems that your friend, John, must come to give his sanction to the matter. I advise you, therefore, to become somewhat expeditious, since so short a time is left, and Dick Bellingham may prove hard to manage.'

"I admit, John, that I was stunned at first by the import of her words (for the thought of England and all that my changing fortune might mean had not yet come home to me), so that for a moment I could not find words in which to answer her, and when I did find my tongue, my lady was gone and the door was closed behind her in my face.

"I know not how long I may have stood before it gazing, forgetful of her admonition to lose no time; of Tom, who was waiting for me, and of all save the fact that my future had been cast at my feet, for me to spurn or cherish as I would.

"A man somewhere shouting to another that the tide had turned, recalled my wits at last, and I made what haste is in me to get aboard

our shallop. It was too late. The tide was set inward and the wind had fallen. All day I hid in our little vessel, for show my head in Boston I would not for fear my lady should behold it. But at dusk I prevailed on Tom and his brother Will, who had accompanied us, to set sail for home, for the moon was bright last night and a favorable wind was blowing, so that long before the dawn I came and found you sleeping quietly while Betty sat beside you. Not knowing how two nights without sleep had weighed upon my eyelids, I begged her to give up her place to me, which she did protesting. The rest you know, except my joy at your recovery, John. And now but two days remain before the 'Queen' sets sail for England, and a couple of hours to the turn of tide."

For a time there was silence in the chimney corner, save for the whirring of the spinning-wheel behind us. Then Betty came and sat beside me, slipping her hand into mine, to indicate by this silent sympathy the direction in which my duty lay.

## CHAPTER VII.

ALL that night, as I lay in the cuddy of Will Hanley's little coaster, rocking gently with the waves beneath and lulled by the knowledge of motion, I think I dreamed of Betty and the pain it was to leave her. Surely no lass could be sweeter than she, when she bade me God-speed and pointed out my plain duty to Hal and country, putting it so before my love. Never was there maid more worthy love and trustfulness of unworthy man; never was there one so full of hope and quiet strength and contagious courage, and never had I so fully realized how much I cared for her as in that time of parting.

First she bade me a soft "good-bye" in the chimney corner, where her mother stood and watched with unavailing disapproval. Here she bound my head again in a clean kerchief, with soothing liniments of her own skilful brewing, and then had she tried my hat thereon and helped me to my cloak, and hid herself beneath

its folds for a sweet moment, where my arms quickly found and held her with the strength of love.

And then when we had taken leave of Mistress Holmes, who wished us joy of our undertaking with a pretty sarcasm, my Betty slipped with Hal and me out into the night. Then Hal too hastened on to attend to some last business, and Betty, with my arm about her strong young shoulders, helped me to the beach, for my steps as yet were tottering. What more was said in those farewell moments is not for anyone to know, but I sought our shallop when Hal came back for me with a sad and yearning heart, going unprotestingly to ease my head in the cuddy bunk. And so, while Hal and Will Hanley were steering our little vessel over the moonlit sea, I lay and pondered over this strange event that was taking us so suddenly from home and sweet-heart. Perhaps in the long hours that followed I may finally have fallen into a deeper dream (for I remember that I thought in truth I talked with Betty, whose eyes had caught somewhat of the gleam and tenderness of the night), and as I lay, the sound of voices raised in angry discussion came to my ears. I started up so suddenly that my head came in contact with the

beams above, and nothing but my sweetheart's bandage saved it from further trouble. The wind had risen meanwhile and we were tossing through the hissing water sharply, while the creaking of the spars told how the ropes were straining. All this I learned in the first moment of waking, as a sailor must learn perforce to do, and then I sat up in my bunk and listened. It was evident that Hal and Will Hanley were disagreeing in something, and that, too, with anger, for my dear boy's voice rose sharp and clear above the noise of the shallop, and Will was shouting disputatiously. I could catch no word of their discourse, however, and so I made my way cautiously along till I reached the hatchway, and then put out my giddy head to look about me. The moon was quite concealed by a thick mass of clouds, but a lightness in the sky told of coming day, and from this I learned that my dreaming had been real and longer than I knew. By this time, with the wind that was blowing, we should have been nearing harbour, and as I swept the horizon it surprised me to find the line of it unbroken. Hal was tending the jib sheet, while Will was at the tiller. As I hove in sight Will cut short a sentence he was engaged upon, and I caught only the last word

or two, which was something about the course. As soon as my dear boy saw me he called to me to come forward, and I made my way to him, leaving Will to mutter to himself.

"A sweet pickle we are in, John," Hal exclaimed, "and I can look only to your advice to right it. We are afloat without a compass and not even the stars to guide us!"

I looked at him stupidly, for in surprise no words will come to me when most I need them, and now there were none could do justice to my astonishment; and so I waited for Hal's explanation.

"I fear our friend hath a mind to trick us, John," Hal whispered in my ear. "What he will gain or what he hopes for I know not, but he hath left his compass behind, as he says, neglectfully, and now he insists that the wind has shifted and that our course is true. We should be in Boston Town by now, and instead no land is visible!"

I asked him how long I had been sleeping, and he told me that he judged the time to be nearing four in the morning. The light in the sky was a kind of soft, diffused twilight that comes sometimes at sea between the rising of the sun and the setting moon, when the whole arc of

the heavens is obscured by lightly flying clouds. As to our course it could tell us little; the wind was blowing steadily, and we were flying with the waves. As Hal had said, we should ere this have seen the harbour light. A feeling of grim combativeness took possession of me, that drove the sickness from my head and steadied my legs, and, leaving Hal still to tend the sheet, I went aft and put my two hands upon the tiller beside Will Hanley's. He looked at me in sullen defiance, waiting for me to speak, and I turned the shallop's nose a point or two to larboard, while he offered no opposition.

"What is the meaning of this, Will?" I asked, though not so calmly perchance as the words look when here set down.

"Meaning of what, Jack Hadder?" he returned, spitefully.

"No need to beat the bush, man!" I exclaimed, for my blood began to tingle. "Where is your compass?"

"A number of miles from here, as I reckon it," he replied, with an impudent laugh, though he relinquished the tiller to me as he spoke and edged away a bit. "I forgot it," he added, with a grin.

"D—— you," I cried out at him. "What is

your pretty game? Explain! What do you mean?"

"Take care of your tongue, John," said Will, with an ugly look at me. "If your young gentleman forward there leaves the sheet, over we all go to Davy Jones. If you let go the tiller, much the same thing will happen. I think we had best strike some form of settlement agreeable to both parties, and right in the sight of the good Lord. So try and keep your hot head under, John, for just now the Lord hath placed me uppermost. It seems that yonder lady in Boston Town hath offered Hal his rightful name and the fortune thereunto belonging, upon condition, as I gather, that he sails with her for England in the 'Queen,' which goes out with this morning's tide. Now I wish not to appear grasping, John, so do not look so scornful, for I ask no more than what is due me. There was a time when you were master of the ship and held us under with threats and pistols, so that we got no share in a bounty which heaven had sent to be divided. Nay, hold your tongue, John. It is my turn to speak and yours to listen patiently. A share in the boy was mine as much as yours. My hand was the first to touch him the day we found him. But you put



me aside, as you have done always. All that you have done for him, I would have done, and the right was mine as good as yours. But the boy must be your prize, and I who found him must have naught to say. And now you expect the whole reward, do you, John? Now you expect me still to be content with nothing while you take your share and mine of the Lord's reward for all these years of patience. Until now, knowing your feeling in the matter, I was content to bide my time. All these years I have been silent, waiting for that time to come. The other night you chose to interfere with me again. I suppose you thought I did not know whose fist it was that felled me, but I bided my time. And now my time has come. Nay, John, have patience yet again. I am a godly man, and can swear no oaths as you are wickedly minded to do. I am seeking no more than my just rights, though these it is my purpose to seek with energy. The Lord feedeth the young sparrow, John, though He does not put the worm into the nest. And so now He hath put His power into my hand, teaching me how to use it with righteousness and strength. Only have patience, John, though I know it is a virtue in which you have long been wanting,

yet one which it is worth your while to cultivate, for now you see how it is in me rewarded ! ”

Now, so angry was I to hear such conversation issue from so vile a mouth, and to learn thereby the rancour and revenge that for so long had harboured in his black heart, that I was scarce able to restrain myself from leaving our shallop to the good Lord's steering and exercising my fists upon this piece of treachery. The pistol which Will had drawn and now flourished in his hand of Cain, made me more contemptuous of his littleness than before, for, as I could plainly see by the ship's lanthorn, it was both eaten with rust and hammerless. But as is often the case with me when I need them most, or when I am in a passion, words stuck to my tongue, and so time was given me to think. In a moment, therefore, I had restrained myself and signed to him to proceed, as if the pistol frightened me.

“ Good, John, ” he began, provokingly. “ Learn thy lesson, man ! It will stand thee in good stead when the time comes. Well, as you know, some nights ago Tom and I brought over from our village to Boston a certain lady in company with our young gentleman yonder ; and it was from a few words which I heard that

night that Providence let in the light upon my problem. It seems, to be brief, John (for I see your strength is not what it was and the tiller seems to burden you), it appears then that this same lady hath some private inkling of our Hal's estate and fortune, and that from gratitude for her rescue she is minded to return to him what already is his by right. For this purpose you are going with her to England, while I was to be left behind, although to me is owing some of this prosperity. It has been put into my mind, therefore, that the best way to keep myself in your memory is to take this voyage to England with you, and gain thereby what may accrue to my share of knowledge. You see, John, I make no attempt at concealment. I pretend only to be an honest man and to seek my rights. Tom also should have come, since he hath an equal share, but the Lord hath made him faint-hearted, so I would not bring him with me. You may choose, therefore, you and your Hal, whether we go or stay here together. It is as you please; the ship and your lady will sail within a couple of hours, and, as near as I can reckon, we lie some twenty miles from Boston."

It was a pretty scheme. I thought it over for

a minute and could see no clear way out of it. There seemed but one chance left to us of getting aboard our vessel (for though the wind was fresh we could scarcely hope to reach the land until sometime after the tide had ebbcd), and this was in beating around the mouth of the harbour, in the hope of intercepting the "Queen" as she left it. This we might do, perchance, if Providence so willed it, and Will should find his compass, for I did not doubt that he could do this as soon as his point was gained. But in case we should succeed in this quest he must of a truth, as he had foreseen, go with us on our voyage, since no one but a murderer could set him adrift to manage his boat alone in the sea that now was running. I asked him if he would not tend the helm for a space so that I might confer with Hal, but he laughed at my simplicity, and said he liked us better as we were. There was nothing for me to do, therefore, but shout the situation to Hal above the noise of wind and wave, and never have I felt so paltry as when I marked Will's mental criticism of the words I used in doing it. Of course Hal's face was hid from me in the darkness, but the dim outline of his figure was plainly visible to my sailor eyes, and my heart went out in pity for

his disappointment when I saw his head bow beneath my words. And yet I felt as I gazed yearningly upon him that he thought not so much of what himself might lose by this treachery of Hanley's, as of what the lady would think of him for not having kept his faith with her. When I had finished my explanation, for a little he answered nothing, and I contented myself in exuding silent scorn upon my godly companion, who, having lighted a pipe, sat puffing with a vast show of indifference while awaiting our decision, and trying not to wriggle under the power of my eyes.

Finally Hal called to me, his voice rising clear and strong above the tumult about us, where another man's would have been half smothered.

"John," he cried, "it is growing lighter yonder. Look!"

I turned my stiffened neck, and saw lying upon the far-off water the first streak of dawn.

"Come about!" Hal shouted. "We must take what chance is left us."

As soon as Will saw that we had given in to him, he took his pipe from his dirty lips and gave me a few choice words of righteous commendation that I had been so directed from

above. He then disappeared into the cuddy, presently coming up again, and bearing in his hand the chart and a battered compass.

"It was borne in upon my mind," he said, "that this ancient instrument hath long lain in the bottom of my locker—though why so great a mercy should be vouchsafed a man like yourself, John, who holds to such blasphemous ways, is one of the mysteries unfathomable. Many black marks are upon the record against you. Patience, patience, John. All things come to those who are content to wait."

Now I cared little for what blackness his record against me bore, unless indeed the man's vile body should represent that well scored page, but all my thoughts were centred upon the pickle we were in. I watched Will's finger eagerly as it slowly worked its way over the chart by the light of our ship's lanthorn, and marked our present direction with his ancient compass. We had steered to the north of our proper course, and should have hard work, I saw, to make the bay in time to meet our vessel even if the wind held, while scarcely a chance in ten of sighting her was ours.

The streak in the east by this time had changed to a broad bed of rose and gold, which

each moment spread and touched some further scintillating crest of water. The wind, to my joy, gave no sign of falling, but rather increased in steadiness, yet, although we raced along at a good pace, I felt as though the water was like a sea of glue holding us almost motionless in its cold adhesive depths. Few words were spoken, for all our energy and tension were given to getting out of her all the speed that our little shallop possessed. As the day grew and spread its welcome light abroad, the haggard, wistful look in Hal's young face, as his eyes eagerly and ceaselessly scanned the horizon south and west, sent a pang of sympathy to my heart which rapidly changed to anger and bitter resentment when I beheld a like eagerness in Hanley's. For now that we had perforce cast in our lot together, the outcome of our journey seemed no doubt to him to hold an equal interest for himself, and he took his turn at the tiller whenever I gave my word to make no advantage of his defenceless position there. For although I much had preferred to have the control in my own hands—feeling thereby an added earnest of our ability—yet my hurt had so unmanned me and need of refreshment pressed so heavily upon my weakened stomach, that once, when I

thought how Betty would have grieved to see me so, the tears welled up into my eyes and I nearly, from giddiness and pure want of strength, caused our boat to luff and lost thereby at least a minute. Afterwards Hal called to me to go below and rest, and I obeyed him meekly.

I know not how long I stayed below, listening, in the angry pain which possessed me, for some cry of triumph from the deck to tell me that our hopes were to be rewarded. And when I could not longer endure confinement and the inward chaffing of suspense, I stumbled forth on deck again, to find a glorious sight confronting me. All overhead the sky had assumed the dainty dazzling blue of our New England winter time, while the sea tossed back its deeper hue in harmony, growing black almost where the sharp outlines of it met the sky. To the north and south and east of us stretched a clear horizon, but to the west it was broken by a sight that made me throw my cap aloft and shout for very joy. For there, a mile away, was running, with all her white sails spread to the wind, an English ship, and all I could do in thankfulness was to seize Hal's hand and wring it.

He had been contemplating this happiness



for perhaps an hour, but had laid command upon Will for silence, so that my rest might not be broken; for, as he could not see within the cuddy where I lay, he had fondly hoped that sleep had blessed me. Will, on the other hand, who could plainly see my restless tossing, had been easily persuaded to this kindness when he saw how my anxiety kept increasing.

The sight of this noble ship drove from my body all thought of pain and dizziness; the blood seemed to stir and bound once more within me; in my joy I might even have embraced Will. Hanley had my dear boy not been so handy, while I laughed like a schoolboy with unexpected holidays in prospect, as I saw the haggard look in Hal's face give place to one of happy relief, and although he had kept his station for so many weary hours, during which both cold and hunger had added their sting to his anxiety, yet he would not even allow me to relieve him, though he was grateful enough for my companionship.

The ship had answered the signal that we had run up, yet for a long time, as it seemed to us, she kept her course unfalteringly, and so again to our dismay increased the distance between us somewhat. Finally, however, we had the joy

to see her come up into the wind and lay-to to wait for us, and at this I went aft and ordered Will to resign to me the tiller. For I knew not what tricks he might have in reserve, and wished to have the boat in my own hands; and yet when he yielded me ready obedience, I could not but feel an added contempt for him, since in all he undertakes I like a man to be thorough, whether his especial line be fishing, or making love, or villainy.

As we drew near I could see Hal's eyes scanning eagerly the little knot of people who were gathered at the ship's side to watch our arrival. One of these presently held aloft a handkerchief, letting the wind wave it briskly to and fro, and Hal with a shout flung his cap into the air. Will Hanley caught it as the wind carried it past him, but I seized it out of his hand and stuffed it into my pocket. And as I looked upon my boy's fair head laid bare to the wind that tossed its curling hair back and forth and rumbled it as Betty sometimes had done with mine, and as I marked the look of eagerness that grew in his young face as he watched the flutter of the waving handkerchief, the tightness came again in my chest and choked me, and I caught myself wondering why sight of that

noble ship a moment since had given me such happiness.

Ten minutes later all three had gained the deck of the "Queen," and our little shallop, with bared poles, was tossing at the mercy of the sea behind us.

## CHAPTER VIII.

OFTENTIMES in the past had Hal given me lessons in the manners that bespeak a gentleman, but never had I thought a time would come when I must return the compliment. Yet as I saw him stand with bare and hanging head before that lady, with never a word to say for himself, and with culprit marked in every line of his attitude, I came as near the blush for him as sailor's skin permits. For when we had gained the deck, and Hal with impetuous gladness had hurriedly made his way to the place where my lady stood (giving scarce a nod of gratitude to the skipper for what he had done for us), she had waved him somewhat haughtily back, not even allowing him to touch her hand, and questioning him only with her half-veiled eyes. So he had stopped before her, and the two stood facing each other in silence, the centre of a curious group upon the deck.

"I suppose you are satisfied that you have fulfilled your undertaking, young sir," the lady said at last; and then, turning slightly and mo-

tioning with her hand towards where Will Hanley stood with me beside the skipper, "Why do you come with so numerous a following?" she asked him. "I recollect including none save yourself in my invitation. Think you that protection is needed against me?"

This she said with so fine a show of scorn for him that, when I saw how the sarcasm hurt my boy, in an instant I was beside him with my hand upon his shoulder.

But Hal shook me off, and, raising his head, proudly took a step nearer to her, and so stood facing her once more alone.

"Madam," he said, in his clear voice, "Madam, had I known that John was not expected to be of this company, neither hope of name or fortune nor sense of duty would have persuaded me to join it. Our shallop is afloat not far astern; should you give command to the captain here, I doubt not that he would return us to it!"

At this my lady smiled; but the captain, who was a man of gruff appearance and seemed not too well pleased with our advent, stepped forward hastily.

"Enough of this!" he cried. "Who or what you are, madam, I know not, nor why I

have so far obeyed your orders. We had nearly lost a tide by your insistence upon delay in the harbour, and but now some further time hath been lost by the rescue of these men—but one of whom, as I take it, we had expected for a passenger. Should you now demand that they be returned to their boat, as this young man suggested, I warn you that a flat refusal awaits you! Enough time hath been consumed in this business, so now arrange matters as best fits necessity!”

While he spoke, my lady had listened quietly, meeting the sullenness of his eyes with her own in languor, and preserving the utmost calmness of demeanour. When he had quite finished, she still regarded him for a moment with a smile of some apparent amusement upon her lips.

“Captain,” she said, finally, “come somewhat closer to me if you please. There is a matter which I would confide to your ear alone.”

He stood and eyed her for an instant with some distrust, and then—for with all his bluntness there was no malice in his make-up—he shuffled towards her as she beckoned to him, and rather shamefacedly inclined his ear.

It was not a dozen words she whispered to

him, but I would have given much to hear them, as I saw him start and glance quickly up at her from under his shaggy eyebrows, and then fix his gaze upon something which she held up before his eyes while she was finishing slowly what she had to say. And then he made her an awkward bow, with hat in hand; and as he turned away and left her standing once more alone and unopposed, to give attention to her own affairs, I heard him utter a few words in apology for his testiness and marked the look of wonder upon his sea-worn face. Afterwards I learned that she had shown him a ring with the royal arms upon it and had told him that her business was the King's; but this is no great matter, save that it served to give her then the right to speak and to be obeyed.

Meanwhile, Hal, with head erect and a spot of glowing colour upon each cheek, stood awaiting her pleasure in silence, and as she again turned towards him I was glad to see how unflinchingly he met her gaze. When she spoke her voice was quiet and soothing, with still a touch of amusement in it.

"Young sir," she said, "young fighting-cock, say rather, it seems that our lot is cast together for the time. Your good friend John

I had not so violently opposed as you seem to suspect. Indeed, I owe him no small debt myself, since he it was who saved me; and this I am not at all likely to forget. Yet I confess I had not thought of him in this connection. I had supposed his reward to be chiefly in your own good fortune, since he professed to love you so; but I find colonial mankind is little different from that with which I have more familiarity. However, we will let it pass, since there is no remedy, and extend the hand of welcome to John. Yet I think it is with some reason that I offer objection to the increase of my retinue by a third man. Would Your Haughtiness deign to explain the presence of this recruit?"

She motioned towards Will Hanley as she spoke, with so charming an air of banter that no sting was visible in it, and I liked her better at that instant perhaps than ever I had before. But Hal, in his relief at this return to graciousness, could not restrain his pent-up feeling longer, and with a single bound, as it seemed, had covered the space between them, before, had she been so minded, she could prevent it, and had seized her hand and kissed it. Then he began to pour out to her the story of our



chase and anxious adventure, to which she listened patiently.

Will Hanley, meanwhile, had betaken his pious person out of sight and hearing, though occasionally I caught a quick, searching glance shoot from my lady's eyes as she sat listening, and following its direction, I was sure to see Will's retreating figure somewhere, having been discovered in the worthy act of spying upon our conversation.

"It seems," our listener said, when Hal and I had finished, "that something hath been gained and something lost in this affair of starting. In the former case a spy upon our movements and a leech who hopes to gain thereby. Him we will strive to tolerate for the time, since we cannot take a more summary course with him. But the second part of the case is more important, for it appears that you are setting out upon a quest for identity, having left behind the chief, nay, perchance the only thing with which you can prove your statements before His Majesty. My own personal word and belief in your behalf may go for much or for little, Master Hal, but which I cannot say. Yet in a case like this there needs some more material proof behind even a woman's word and power

of persuasion, to move the King to exert active authority. What we can do without the blade Dick Bellingham has still in keeping, I cannot promise you!"

As she said this a blank dismay came over me, for, as I live, this was the first time that thought of our possessions left behind had entered my mind since Will's base treachery had thrust itself upon us. A great desire took possession of me to assist his loathly body into the company of Davy Jones, though even that I thought too good for him, for I felt as if now indeed all was lost to us. But when I looked at Hal to see how he bore this new misfortune, my spirits came trooping back to me invigorated by their brief escape. For Hal, instead of being cast down, now that my lady smiled at him looked as though the universe would not weigh heavily upon his sturdy shoulders, while his face, so recently become full of light and sunshine, could not immediately regather clouds.

"Madam," he cried, "if His Majesty refuse your word, surely so paltry a thing as a small blade of steel will not affect him! Let us not give it a thought! We have hope and courage plenty. Do not let it trouble you, madam!"

She looked at him fixedly as his fresh young

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voice addressed her, and in her eyes, which had grown soft and dreamy, I fancied that I saw somewhat of both longing and regret.

"I have warned you, Master Hal," she said, "not to expect too much. To be careful where you place your trust. Forget not my warning; old friends are best, though new ones may seem at first more zealous. What I may do to aid you is yet a future happening. See that you build not too strongly, Hal, upon what may easily prove no more than a bubble, and above all, take care how you make your business in this venture public property. No boasting, Master Hal, and let your good friend John ever keep his watchful eye upon the lookout for breakers ahead."

"I do not know why it is that you warn me so," Hal replied. "Why should I not trust those to whom trust is justly due? As yet none but Will Hanley out of all my friends hath ever failed me. To John here, madam, would I give my soul with willingness, feeling that he would guard it purer perchance than I can do. While for yourself, madam——"

As he paused, one of those sudden and unaccountable changes of mood which I before had noted took possession of my lady, and

she started to her feet, her eyes ablaze and steely.

“Do you think, boy,” she cried, so loud that the captain, who was standing near, turned in surprise to look at us—“do you dream for a moment that I have any need of your protestations of friendship? Think you that I am so single-hearted, so simple-minded, as to do all this for you alone, you—a stranger? Think you that you are aught to me save one who hath rendered me a service, and whom I had a foolish wish to repay? Take the warnings I have given you and ponder them, but look not to me for further explanations. I have said ‘Beware’—see that the time never comes in which you complain that I said it not! And remember that I promise—nothing!”

She motioned me to give her my hand, waving Hal aside as though she had had enough of him, and so I handed her clumsily across the deck and down the steep companionway, marvelling greatly at her strange passionate outbreak. Afterwards, I wiped my hand upon the skirt of my coat, for the touch of her fingers had somehow seemed to burn me; and then I went back on deck to see if a pipe would help me to solve the mystery. Hal stood leaning

against the rail, gazing upon the blue depths beneath him, and I went the other way, leaving him to his thoughts. For sometimes a man can meditate best in company and sometimes he does best alone, but whichever way it is, the one who loves him most is bound to humour him.

I went, therefore, and sat me down beside the capstan, to do some thinking on my own account for the first time (it being my first moment of leisure) since the night my head was broken. A glass of strong grog and biscuits had been given me, and my strength had wonderfully revived, so that my head no longer showed symptoms of detachment from its native body, and my legs again belonged to me. My pipe glowed warmly and pleasantly, while the glancing sunshine sent a glow of correspondence through my body. For in order that a man may think with profit to his friends, he must feel somewhat of bodily comfort, and the more of this that comes to him the more bountifully does wisdom flow into his open brain. So I ensconced myself in loneliness, with little fear of interruption, placing myself where not even Hal's form was visible, for I had no wish to spy upon him while I knew that he was troubled. Surely this lady who had made pretence of be-

friending him was a puzzle of no mean magnitude, and I knew my dear boy was striving hard to solve some portion of it—and that he scarcely would be able. I had more hope for myself, perhaps, knowing, as I thought, something of the ways of women from the experience I had had with Betty, to make no mention of her mother—and this was the way in which I looked upon the matter.

A brief mention hath been made already of my sister who some years before had dwelt in London, and had written to me thence, a year or two before her death, to give account of her way of living; and although it had been my firm intention to reply and let her know me still in the flesh, yet never had I seen the way to it until the opportunity was lost. A long letter had she sent me (her education having been more properly conducted than my own), giving account of the way in which her mistress—for she was maid to a certain noble lady—kept her court in the country and strove by private gayety to forget the dreariness of the Commonwealth. A merry time they had of it, except upon occasion when it was best to show their loyalty, and for these pious times they did their utmost to make up afterwards. When His

Majesty, King Charles the Second, returned to Whitehall, my sister and her lady made entry into London close upon that monarch's heels, and of the Court and the merry doings there, and how things were conducted, she had given me a brief account.

When madam appeared to us, therefore, from the wreck of the "Fearless," and set forth plans for Hal's advancement to his rightful estate, yet gave us no inkling of her own, nor privilege of questioning, my mind went back somehow to the things my sister told of. With these as a basis upon which to build my correspondence, I proceeded with my thinking somewhat as follows:

The familiar way in which my lady (as Hal and I had grown to call her) had spoken the name of our Worshipful Governor, Master Richard Bellingham, to say nothing of the air of superiority with which she viewed all things, proved to my mind that she had some acquaintance with the world's great ones. Then the fact that she had kept herself so well secluded while in the town of Boston, apparently fearful lest His Excellency should get sight of her, was some proof, I decided between my puffs of tobacco, that had he known her presence some-

thing would have come of it. Her apparent wish to avoid him I set down to a fear lest she should be detained by his importunities from so soon setting out upon her return to England; for had she missed the "Queen," some months might possibly elapse before so good a chance of passage would occur again. Speculation as to the meaning of her presence upon the wrecked "Fearless" ended somewhat unsatisfactorily for me, since I could not well reconcile her long voyage to our new land with the eagerness she showed to leave it, and here the experience of my sister gave me no precedent to work upon. But one thing I did not doubt, and this was that some deeper purpose lay in her zeal for Hal's welfare than mere personal gratitude for what we had done for her. And it was because of this belief, perhaps, more than for any other reason, that I had that latent fear of her. In my mind I decided that her coming had been neither in hope of finding a husband nor for that next best opportunity which our colonies afforded—freedom in religious practice, which everyone was given, unless indeed he had a mind to differ from his neighbours; but that rather it had been a venture after fortune or advancement in which, perchance, our governor might



be concerned ; or else that the reason was a more subtle one upon which it was not my business to speculate.

That her meeting with Hal had somehow changed her plans, whatever these may have been, was evident, since from the time of her interview with me concerning him her one desire had been to quickly return to England. And this, too, whether Hal accompanied her or whether she sailed alone. The captain of the " Queen " had plainly intimated that madam had desired him to delay his hour of sailing upon our failure to appear in time, so that another chance might be given us, but at the same time she had apparently shown no hesitancy about taking her own departure in case we failed entirely to appear. Hal's company therefore was not indispensable to her. And now that I recalled the circumstances, it seemed to me that our advent had not been hailed at first with great satisfaction ; and yet again it was madam who had induced the captain to lay-to until we should come alongside. Her cold reception of Hal, though partially explained by her disapproval of his companions, her rapid change to kindness and interest and zeal to serve his cause, with again the strange outbreak of passion over

his expression of trust in her, all this I thought betokened a mental struggle within her, which my sagacity could find no meaning for. Why did she warn him against herself (for she could have in mind no other), even while she seemed bent upon doing him so great a service? Why should she grow angry and scornful at Hal's young chivalry? Why should she treat him with such gentleness in one moment that her spurning in the next carried a deeper sting?

So for long I sat and pondered, and three pipes of strong tobacco failed to solve the mystery, and then, when I was like to think my head no better than Hal's in this case, a sudden idea popped into it. Perchance my mind had strayed a little, for I know my lips were forming themselves to whisper thoughts of Betty—and it was for this reason, no doubt, that remembrance of the strangeness of love awakened in me. What more probable to cause the peculiar way in which she treated him than that madam had noted the eagerness in my dear boy's honest eyes, and saw in herself the reason of it? A lady of her grace and beauty and breeding must be well acquainted with the signal of admiration thrown out from the eyes of man. What it was that she knew of Hal she

had not confided to us, so that we could not tell what reasons there might be to prevent his loving her even had she wished this love from him.

She alone knew, or thought she knew, something of his history, and from this view of it her conduct and her warnings might be meant alone in kindness—mere danger signals to warn him off the shoals where he was like to run aground. And this little part of a solution to my problem eased me somewhat, though it left so much more unanswered. For why, when it came to that, should my lady not confide her knowledge to us?

In my mind I determined to watch and wait—never quite allowing my suspicions to die out, yet on the other hand suppressing them before madam and even before Hal, lest their very appearance turn suspicion upon myself. For I knew only too well the sharpness of those eyes of my lady's, which saw clearly where others were blind, and seemed to read in me all the thoughts which I had considered safe so long as I had not spoken them.

All the morning I let Hal work over his problem without interference, though all the time I longed so strongly to compare notes with him upon it. But I knew full well that when he

wished my sympathy or help he would not be slow to seek it, and saw that as yet he could not talk of the strange manner of our reception aboard the "Queen."

At midday my lady came on deck again, her face calm and her eyes a-glitter with merriment, her tongue tripping with wit and good-natured banter. Hal at first, not sure what course to take with her, watched this new side of her character with much uneasiness, for this was not what Betty, with her gentle cheeriness, had taught him to expect from women. But my lady teased him prettily for his solemn face, although she made no especial pleasure of him, but rather turned her attention to our bluff captain and my humble self. Indeed, it was not long before under her smiles the captain so forgot his native gruffness that I could not but blush to see a brave man hoodwinked so, and did my best to draw her attention from him that he might retain more honour to his position. Even the sailors grinned as they passed us, while Master Baxter, a godly minister from Boston, who was our fellow passenger, found his eyes sadly tempted to stray from the good Book upon which he strove to fix them, and finally was constrained to remove his person to a spot

in our little vessel where the devil appeared less sportive. Yet I watched him betake himself into Will Hanley's company with somewhat of misgiving.

At the midday meal my lady would have both Hal and myself to keep her company in the cabin, while our captain and the long-faced servitor of the good Lord sat upon the other side of the board. Master Baxter at this feast endeavoured, I remember, with what strength was in him, to prove a death's-head, trying thereby to show forth his righteous habit. But my lady, seeing his silent disapproval of her mood, turned her batteries forthwith in his direction, and stilling for the nonce somewhat of her wit and merriment, assumed an air of sober concern in the affairs that gave him interest. She began a fusillade of questions with clever arguments and crisply turned statements, which she gave out as facts, setting forth a knowledge of things theological which surprised all her listeners greatly, and so cleverly did she weave her net and tangle it, that when she finished with our minister, what with her talk and the flash of her eyes upon him, such confusion reigned in his mind that almost the Pope might have gained a convert. And when he had made an end of

his abstemious meal, and having thanked his Maker for it, left us to go on deck again, there was a bright spot on either cheek in which both shame and anger mingled, so that in my heart I pitied him. The captain sent after him a loud guffaw, at sound of which I saw his thin legs falter as they made an awkward ascent of the companionway. My lady also was watching him, as it seemed, and at the captain's laughter she turned suddenly upon our skipper, who was so enjoying his little joke, exclaiming, somewhat hotly:

"Have a care of your manners, sir! Much in this direction as in some others might we learn from yonder quiet gentleman!"

This little incident have I put down to show once more how changeable was her temper, so that no one knew for ten minutes at a time what to expect from her. For while with one breath she ridiculed and made light of those things which most nearly touched her companions or surroundings, with the next she upheld them with the staunchest, reserving, as it seemed, to herself alone the right of criticism.

In the manner here recorded then began our voyage to England—a voyage which, despite the severity of weather, was as quick a passage as

ever ship had made. Yet though the sun had bid us a cheery God-speed and had at first sweet things to offer us, we found soon enough that this was but the bait with which the sea is ever tempting her children. With the New Year we had set sail, and although its third week still found us tossed and knocked about by violent winds, whose chief purpose seemed to buffet us as much as they were able, even while they helped us swiftly on, we were beginning already to look for the English coast with longing hearts, for no one knows so well as a sailor how to long for his destination. And during this time our daily life on board the "Queen" continued much the same as on that first day which I have tried to describe. My lady through it all gave way to her strange changes of mood, so that sometimes for hours together—aye, even for days—she kept her cabin, coming not forth even to partake of those dainties which our skipper provided for her from his private stores. From these times she would then emerge radiant and full of life and spirit, so that her appearance was like a burst of sunshine on board our vessel. Again, with the aid of Hal's arm, she would walk the deck, giving such kindness to him that the poor boy could scarce contain his

joy, and then would my suspicions well up from their hiding place to bid me be more watchful.

Or again, she would spend hours in some sunny corner of the deck discussing spiritual matters with our good friend (as he had grown), Master Baxter, who lost no opportunity which she accorded him of striving to win back the prestige of which her first unlooked-for onslaught had deprived him. Sometimes even did she seem to take especial pains to please our captain, making great interest in his stories of the sea (though it was plain enough when she listened to me that she liked my tales the better), and begging him even to give her some lessons in the art of navigation. And this, of course, she did to please us by showing interest in our several concerns, for never was a lady with so great a trick of pleasing when she so desired, or one more easily amused. But during all the time never once did she refer to the business upon which we were bound, nor give one hint of her own name or station. Indeed, as we drew nearer England, she seemed more and more to grow moody and absent, giving us less of her company, though making up for this in quality what it lacked in quantity. Oftentimes I could have sworn the tears were in her eyes, though



she had silently dared me to see them when she caught my gaze upon her. To Will Hanley I had never seen her speak. Indeed, that pious man must have had a lonely time of it had not good Mr. Baxter in his innocence been attracted by such a show of godliness. Whether Will profited much by his kindly teaching we had no means of knowing then, though afterwards we were to learn; only of this much were we certain : that there was much soil in his make-up for the seed of truth to fall upon.

And so, with many varying experiences of pleasure and of cloudiness, of expectation and disappointment, of toil and hardship from the sea and the patience which is a sailor's virtue, we came at last to our safe anchorage in Portsmouth harbour.

## CHAPTER IX.

SO ended our voyage to England, and so unknowing what might lie before, we looked once more upon our native land. For no matter if a man spend all the years of his remembrance upon a shore that is alien to him, and though it hold all that is dearest to his thought of life, yet in his deepest heart abides for ever that feeling for his mother country which neither lapse of time nor distance can obliterate, which springs anew and blossoms and bears its proper fruit whenever chance arises.

It was then with a feeling of joy and deep thanksgiving and a kind of exultation that my eager foot touched the spring of earth again, and I joined with a hearty good-will the prayer of praise which Master Baxter offered for our deliverance. For although but little mention had been made of it (for fear of appearing garrulous to any who might misunderstand my good intention), our voyage, if short, had been fraught with no little peril and privation, and much of hard, cold labour, and so to be once

more on shore was to feel a joy of which a landsman hath no knowledge.

My lady signified her intention of lying that night in Portsmouth to gain some little repose before we set out for London, as she had proposed at once to do. Our captain himself accompanied us ashore, being, seemingly, very loath to part company with my lady, while I noted the pains she took to make him more so. For the manner in which she thanked him for his service to her was enough to make him dream that no other man existed, and that but just himself was necessary to her scheme of living. He insisted upon escorting her to the "Red Lion," where we were to spend the night, and took occasion to impress the host with madam's importance, and the littleness of that of her companions. He then with great reluctance, since nothing gave him excuse to tarry further, tore himself away and went to discharge a grudging duty to his ship. Of Master Baxter we had taken an immediate leave, for he had no reason to loiter in quest of rest and quietness, but, as he said, must hasten about his master's business—though this perhaps to secular vision differed little from his own. He gave us his blessing solemnly and in

order, beginning with my lady, for whom he begged the Lord a better understanding of her natural gifts, and courage to use them for the larger benefit of her soul. Hal, he exhorted to keep steadfast in the faith, and to let no dream of temporal advancement tempt him therefrom. Myself, he advised most earnestly to abjure from those things which tend to draw the soul from righteousness, notably the snare of women, and conceit in notoriety (though why he took such pains with me I wondered even while I thanked him for it), and he begged that could he ever be of service to us, I would not hesitate to communicate with him at his house in London. For this I thanked him once again, and then he wrung Hal's hand and mine, while over madam's, which she held out to him half hesitatingly, he bent his bared head, but yet refrained from kissing it. He left us then and went his way alone, a good man in spirit though somewhat scrimped in body, as the saints ever seem to be, yet a man withal whom we had learned to respect for his very simplicity and singleness of purpose, though at the same time we could not but pity his weakness. As for Will Hanley, whatever may have been his first plan of action, certain it was that he had now

no apparent intention of burdening us with his company, for although he had left the "Queen" but little after ourselves, as I took pains to learn, he had not afterwards been seen by any one of us. Whether it was that he feared my vengeance should I catch him by himself (for I had candidly informed him that I should never after spare his head when it came within reach of my fist), or whether, as my lady half sneeringly suggested, his companionship with Master Baxter on the voyage had induced a change of heart; or whether, again, he had schemes laid deeper than we knew, of course we could not tell, and his absence caused us little uneasiness, nor were we disposed to be regretful of it.

I was interested to see how, as we came ashore in Portsmouth, madam took pains to muffle her chin carefully in the folds of her cloak, and to draw her hood down so that it should conceal as much of her face as possible (for she still wore the pretty Puritan cloak with which my Betty had provided her, since her own was lost in the wrecked "Fearless"; and this gave me a pang sometimes), disguising somewhat, as I could see, her carriage also, and walking with her head cast down, which was a way very strange to her. I saw how she glanced

continually about her as if she looked for someone, and how, in clinging to Hal's arm as we made our way through the curious assemblage of people toward the inn, she hid as much of herself as she was able behind his tall figure. At the inn, madam would have for herself at once a private room, in which, to our disappointment, she ordered her supper to be spread, and it was on the threshold of this that she took leave of our late captain. Afterwards she sent Hal and me to the common room to sup, bidding us take especial note of the people there assembled that we might report to her of them as soon as our meal was finished. But first she gave me a bit of paper with instructions to seek out a certain house in High Street, and there put it into the hands of a man whom I should find, corresponding to the description which she gave me. I went out, therefore, and found a boy to guide me, and presently we came to a little shop wherein I could see nothing to sell, but only a dry old man to match in sombreness with his surroundings. To him I presented my lady's message, and, after he had scowled over it until my impatience grew out of bearing almost, he handed me in return a little bag full of something heavy that jingled

as I carried it away, and so I felt it with my hands, and it was coined money. In the meantime madam had sent Hal to search out a coach to carry us upon the morrow the first stage of our journey to London, for she would not travel in a common coach and, indeed, was most particular concerning the comfort of her vehicle. Up to that time I had paid, from the savings of our six years of industry, all the expenses of our journey. And this had seemed no more than just to me, since the journey was for our great advancement, although Hal's little fortune became thereby very sadly diminished. But now when I put the outcome of my visit to this money-lender into my lady's hands, she would insist upon counting out for us then and there a reimbursement of our spendings, and this money she forced into my pockets when Hal was looking for our coach; and very honestly do I say that I received it grudgingly, because I liked it not that we should be so entirely beholden to her. But I could not again face the anger which my first refusal had aroused.

In the public room, whither we presently repaired for supper, a table was spread for Hal and me in a cold corner (since an earlier arrival occupied the chimney-corner), and here we pro-

ceeded to do justice to our first eggs and bacon in old England, and to feel the pleasant tickle of October's brew upon our long-fevered palates. Between my moments of active exercise in this delight, I tried to do madam's bidding concerning who might be our fellow travellers, but as I soon saw that my dear boy thought more of this than of his stomach, I let him have first chance at the survey, knowing that a pipe would help me afterwards to better force of observation.

It was not, therefore, until my appetite was satisfied that I looked about with any degree of intelligence. We had been placed, as I have already mentioned, at a table somewhat remote from the fire, for the captain's recommendation, and the roughness of our appearance (coming as we did from our long voyage), together with the native plainness of our colonial attire, seemed not to impress our host with any sense of our importance, so that he treated us with an indifference which, upon the whole, did not ill satisfy us. Besides, his whole attention was taken with the guest who occupied the chimney-corner, upon whom I, too, presently turned my eyes.

He sat with his back in our direction, so that his face was hid from us, while a great screen



had been placed between him and the fire, making so a kind of ingle-nook, in which the light was shifting and uncertain. The table before him was spread with a white napkin, upon which his supper had but just been placed. Instead of the ale which served for Hal and me, he had a bowl of steaming drink of a colour rich brown and a smell of sweetness arising from it, and this our host bore carefully to him with his own hands. Afterwards I learned that this was called "chocolate"—a beverage come lately into fashion, and good for those who are able to swallow it. As the stranger lifted the bowl to his lips I noted the handsomeness of strength in his large, firm hand, and how the firelight sent forth from it the larger flash of brilliants. His dark, finely-curved periwig fell well down upon his shoulders, yet his dress was plain, and stained here and there with wet, and the mud upon his spurs and high riding-boots told of a recent gallop over roads that at best were only passable. He had unbuckled his sword, and it lay, together with his hat and a brace of pistols, upon the bench beside him. This much only was I able to see of him from the difficulty of our positions, for he continued to present nothing but his back to the company. Hal, to

whom a pipe was nothing in these days of waiting, as soon as he had finished the food that had been brought to him, begged that he might leave me here to my comfort while he went to see whether perchance madam had any further commands for the night, and to this I yielded readily, knowing that what he could tell her of our fellow travellers would but whet her curiosity, and that, left to myself, I might (with good luck and my native shrewdness) learn something to give her satisfaction. I smoked on when he had left me, therefore, in silence, keeping my ears and eyes wide open and my tongue in strict captivity, for to see and hear we are commanded, but speech is mostly of the devil.

Besides the traveller in the ingle-nook, there were in the room three or four men whom I took for townsfolk, come in for their evening draught of ale. These sat together in the corner opposite my own and gossiped, while mine host hovered about between them and his other guest, with a somewhat anxious countenance, as if their talk pleased him none too well. At first it had turned chiefly upon matters of state and politics, in which I thought they set forth enough discernment to turn all questions governmental into much more proper channels than

those in which they now were flowing, if only the chance were given them. And so I scarce could withhold my admiration and my joy at meeting with these statesmen. As they warmed to their ale, however, the tenor of conversation changed to more mellow matters, and I heard them hint stories of the court which had nearly caused me to cry out my astonishment and indignation at the things they put upon His Majesty. Tales they related of the great scourge of fire which had visited the town the year before, so that my hair arose almost to hear the things they told, and I wondered if madam had been there to see it all. And afterwards they went back a year the more and spoke of that dread pestilence of which we in New England had heard.

“The King and all his beauties,” said one, “held revels day and night to make themselves forgetful of the great Destroyer. Perhaps it is the memory of this fear that was so much the greater, which makes His Majesty fear the Dutch so little!”

This he said with so mean a sneer that it was hard for me to smoke my pipe indifferently, yet I held my peace and listened.

“They say the King’s ladies were all so pale

with terror that no paint was strong enough to hide it, and so not a single beauty remained in all the court unless it was la belle Stewart, who has ever been able to amuse His Majesty, and herself. I hear she hath not been seen at court these three months, and no one knows her whereabouts. So even Nell hath failed this time to lift His Majesty's spirits, for she cannot lift her own just now; we commoners are not so badly off after all, for at least we still can swallow!"

Here the speaker burst into a loud laugh, in which he was heartily joined by his companions, and lifting high their pewter pots, after first, they had drained them to the dregs (which I thought a curious way of compliment), they cried the King's health and laughed again.

So intent was I upon this proceeding, that I had almost forgot the gentleman in the ingle-nook, but now an exclamation of dismay from our host, who came running in among us, caused me once more to turn my attention to him. To my surprise I saw that he had started to his feet and was gazing with head thrown back and sparkling eyes upon these revellers. Some feeling of change in the atmosphere of the room had caused them to stop short in the midst of

their laughter, and now each returned the steady look of the stranger with fallen jaw and uncertainty depicted in his face. The landlord hastily placed himself in front of the gentleman of the ingle-nook, bowing and rubbing his hands together nervously, in an effort at conciliation, but the stranger, taking a quick step forward, seized him by the arm, and, without a word spoken, spun him sharply backward against the wall. He then walked slowly forward, his face calm but full of the quiet strength which an irritable man hath no knowledge of, or ability to use. Yet as he passed me I saw something like a sparkle of merriment in the brilliancy of his eyes, and then he went and stood beside the table and looked down upon the townsfolk.

"Landlord, fill these cups," was all he said.

Our host quickly did his bidding, and when the ale was brought, the stranger, who had stood quietly in his place with hands resting upon the table, straightened himself and once more threw back his head.

"Now," he said, in the same way of quietness, and with the slightly foreign accent I had noted in his first few words, "each man of you will drink the King's health in proper fashion,

and the owner of the pot that is still unemptied when I have counted ten, deserves the thrashing I shall give to him! Now, then, gentlemen. Long live his gracious Majesty! One—two—three——”

So he counted slowly, and the men, with apparently no thought of disobeying him, gulped down their foaming ale as hastily as nature would allow. With a faint smile on his lips the stranger watched their frantic gulplings, and then, when each man had put down his empty pot and looked first sheepishly at his mates and then around at him as though awaiting further orders, he again leaned forward with hands upon the table and repeated his command.

“Landlord, fill them up again!”

Mine host came bustling up as before, a deep wrinkle of perplexity between his eyebrows, so that I had nearly laughed aloud to see him. When the ale again was set before the men, who now were grinning foolishly, as though they wished to let us know that they were parties to the jest, the stranger drew up his tall figure as before and let his voice ring clearly out:

“Have your flagons ready, men!” he cried.

"This to the health of the King, and confusion to all who backbite him!"

At this one or two of the men hesitated, but the stranger, leaning towards them with a graceful bend of his long back, said sweetly:

"I offer you the same terms, gentlemen, always the same terms! Hesitation is fatal to your comfort, let me again assure you!"

So not knowing what else to do (for their wits seemed somewhat muddled with previous talk and deep potations), each man for the second time put down his empty mug upon the table. Their faces by this time, however, had grown flushed and angry, though they stared sullenly more at each other than at their tormentor; for a man, no matter what his station, loves ever to pose as superior to his fellows, and as soon as his best friend finds him out he thinks the world has injured him.

But he of the ingle-nook, it appeared, had not yet had enough. A third time he commanded that the ale be replenished, waiting calmly as before until the table held it, while his victims only stared about them stupidly.

"This time, good friends," he said, briskly, "we will have no lagging, if you please. This time I count but six. Attention, all. To the

health of each and every lady of the court, and confusion to all their enemies! One—two—drink—three—faster, faster——”

But whether it was that their stomachs rebelled against so much being expected of them, or whether the good men looked upon this toast as an insult not to be washed down with ale, I know not, but this is what now happened. The man whose tongue had been the glibest concerning the scandals which had been related, a man somewhat younger than the others, and with a pompous manner, suddenly stopped his vain effort at swallowing more than his body could by any possibility contain, and starting unsteadily to his feet, flung what remained of the liquid into the stranger's face. The others put down their half-empty mugs in blank amazement, while from mine host came a wail of sheer dismay. The gentleman of the ingle-nook, without a word, took from his pocket a kerchief and quietly wiped his face. He then glanced swiftly about with eyes that belied the calmness of his demeanour, noting apparently the favourable chances in the way of position, the unhappy condition of the landlord, and, for the first time, myself, now standing on my feet and ready. For how could I watch one man pitted against



so many and make no move to help him, even though the righteousness of his cause were dubious? Seeing my sympathy and honest wish to aid him, he smiled and called to me to fetch him his riding-whip. This I made haste to do, coming, in the accomplishment of my purpose, into such violent collision with mine host, who strove to intercept me, that for the second time the good man stood flattened against his wainscot. Meanwhile he of the ingle-nook had slowly divested himself of his coat, and, taking the whip from my hand, motioned me to stand aside. And so I put my back by chance against the door, and then was I privileged to watch as pretty an exhibition of skill as ever it had been my luck to see. For my new acquaintance, first putting himself into position like a man about to pink an opponent, with a slight twist of the wrist, flicked the now thoroughly angered townsman daintily upon the nose with the point of his riding-whip as another might use a sword. With a great oath the man made a drunken lunge at his tormentor (which the stranger nimbly eluded), and unable to stay the force of his effort at revenge, collided suddenly with the wall, while the whip made a stinging circuit of his calves. With another oath he turned stu-

pidly and started forward, with hands stretched out before him in impotent rage. Again the hot lash descended, falling this time in lightning wreaths upon his bare, outstretched wrists. The next instant it was curling playfully in close proximity to his shoe-buckles, then fell in resounding slaps upon his shoulders. It whistled through the air and dropped tenderly about his ears; it grew long or short or broad or cutting, as its wielder willed; it rose and fell with a rhythm that was beautiful to see; it spread itself and became all inclusive, so that when the fellow's companions, after a few moments' dull amazement, made dazed attempts to aid him, they took their share of punishment before their principles as men of peace, caused them to flee incontinently as far as the room allowed. Meanwhile the landlord had been wringing his hands in a wild confusion over this dispensation which so suddenly had visited him, making pitiful efforts to drag me from my place by the door, and calling for aid as loudly as his panic and a naturally watery voice permitted. Cries of thieves, fire, and a general alarum sounded in the passageway behind me, and I heard my dear boy shouting my name in tones that indicated his concern. Meanwhile the gentleman of the

ingle-nook, having apparently wearied of his exercise, was slowly investing himself in his riding-coat, while the townsmen stood huddled together in a corner, muttering vengeance, and handling their persons with tenderness in trying to find once more their bearings. Seeing that all was over, therefore, I left my place beside the door as being too conspicuous, and again seated myself in the chair where Hal had left me. Before I could light my pipe, however, and assume the air of innocence and unconcern which became my part in the transaction, the door was burst open and the room was full of people. First of all came Hal with an expression of great anxiety upon his face, which turned to one of astonishment when he saw me sitting in such calmness; and after him the good wife of our landlord, who approached her husband with such an air of interrogation that he seemed to shrink to half the size he first appeared to me. At her back trooped a dozen curious men and maids and boys, some with faces pale with fright and some red with eagerness for the fray. Now seeing such great reinforcements ready, and feeling sympathy for their plight in the air, the men of Portsmouth, whose conceit had been so woefully disregarded, began to gather

together their muddled senses, and to think upon the justice due them. One shouted for a constable, while another warned the distracted landlord to guard the door that their assaulters might have no opportunity to escape. And as the sense of humiliation and of dignity sorely injured came back to them, they grew the more vociferous in their outcry and demands until I had nearly laughed aloud to hear them. For before a full possession of the natural faculties came back to them, while mine host was fast losing his own senses in a hopeless effort to pacify everybody, while I was engaged in briefly satisfying Hal's curiosity, and describing in a word or two the accomplishment I had witnessed; while all this, I say, was in progress, I had seen the stranger gather his sword and pistols together, nod carelessly to me as he placed his hat with precision upon his head, and pass unopposed through the open doorway.

## CHAPTER X.

NOW, so wonderful a thing is innocence, that thought of my own position in the matter never once had presented itself to my mind, until it was brought thither by the force of outward circumstances. For, having finished my explanation to Hal and my mug of ale, in the midst of all this confusion, I started to go with him to give report to my lady, who waited in her chamber above to know the cause of the disturbance. Though it takes long to tell it, the time since Hal had entered the room until we started together to leave it, was scarcely more than perhaps three minutes, and so it happened that I rose from my chair just as the escape of the stranger was discovered. Hal was before me and had already reached the passage, when suddenly a dozen hands were laid upon me and voices shouted in the language of the Jews, "This man, too, was with him!"

It hath ever been a marvel to me and a lesson in humility that a man who once had been a

coward could become so great a saint as Peter afterward became; and often had I complacently pictured to myself the dignity with which I had borne myself had the chance been given me to occupy his position. And yet as I swung myself about and confronted that little horde of excited, drunken, and angry citizens, had time been allowed for parley, no doubt I should have emulated the example of the holy apostle. As it was, however, I had chance only to draw my weapon, and this I flourished in their faces, commanding them to let go their hold, while I struggled yet the more to force obedience. But this show of defiance served only to anger them the more, and above the gruff execrations of the men I heard the good wife of mine host cry shame to me for drawing upon men who could not defend themselves. So I, for want of another way, I, who have been called a brave man and have faced many a danger in my time unflinchingly, found myself dodging madly this way and that, striking out with the flat of my hand in a frantic effort to beat aside and escape from, in flight, a trio of drunken aldermen, some maids, and a staring stable boy or two. In this noble manner of procedure I worked my way, by dint of perseverance and muscle well directed,

into the passage whither, as I said, Hal had preceded me. Here I found by comparison a clear path, and the place was both dark and narrow, which gave me the more advantage. I was relieved, too, to find that Hal had not noticed my detention, but in his eagerness to report the affair to madam, and supposing, doubtless, that I followed close behind him, he had already cleared the passage and disappeared, for I wished him not to become implicated in the affair, lest some disaster overtake the schemes my lady had for him.

There was little of dignity in my escape; but this is a truthful chronicle, and so I set down what happened. Once in the passage, there was naught to retard my progress but a pair or two of hands which clutched my coat-tails. It had become a question as to which would better grace the Portsmouth jail, my coat or my person, and with little hesitation I decided in favour of the former. So with a quick jerk and a squirm, which every sailor knows, I parted company with a comfortable garment, giving thanks meanwhile that all my property reposed in other pockets.

How many people and of what estate they were that I pushed against and struggled with

during my transit to the open street, I know not, but from the rents my dear shirt showed ('twas Betty made it for me), and from my tenderness of body afterwards, I judged there were a legion of good fighters. For a mile or more after I had escaped them I ran along the streets, skulking in the shadows, tripping over strange obstructions, dodging here and there through the narrow ways, wearied, bruised, bewildered, angry, before the voices of the half dozen men and boys who gave me chase, with scarce knowledge of their reason for it, finally grew faint and then were silent. A dog, who thought it was a merry game of tag he played, was the last to leave me, giving a friendly bark and wiggle by way of good-night.

More slowly then I stumbled on alone and dwelt upon the strangeness of this happening. For there was I, a fugitive in a cause I had not entered save as witness, and in which I had no interest at all, and by this circumstance I was separated from my dear boy just when I thought he had most need of me. Where I was I knew not save that Portsmouth lay behind me, and in front was the open country full of strange dikes and ditches. A road, deep and sunken with mud, sucked at my feet, but gave no hope



of company. The only light about me was in the blazing stars. I turned and looked back at Portsmouth, nestling cosily by the sea, and thought of Hal. While I doubted not that the meaning of my flight would be clear to him, my fear was that in some effort to discover me he might implicate himself and so let this paltry thing come before his business with my lady. Yet, I felt at the same time that she would use her greatest influence over him to hasten their departure for London even though she never saw me more; and this, I said in bitterness, she would think no such great matter. Still, on the road I might yet hope to meet with them, since it was an easy thing to find the London highway, and to lie in wait thereon until my boy appeared. So having no better course, and wishing to put behind me as far as possible all chance of unwelcome detention, I decided upon this course, and, turning my back once more on Portsmouth, trudged on.

I am a happy-natured man and ever was. The good in life outweighs the evil, and is ever at hand when one looks out for it, so laughter always is the friend of man, and its tears should be the only tears allowable. As I pulled my boots out of the sucking mud of the road,

with each step farther on, my thought went back to the room I had so rudely quitted, while the faces I had seen there when last I looked upon it, arose before me in the darkness. The three stout men of Portsmouth, stupefied with their unwilling drink, red with indignation, perspiring with astonishment; the host divided between fear of his wife and anxiety over his customers; the serving men and maids with mouths and eyes agape; all this, I say, came again before me, until perforce I threw back my head and startled the unseen realm with a long and loud guffaw. Truly the silence which broods for ever round us is a wonderful and a sacred thing; and no sooner did sound of my laughter of itself die away than did this strange and ever-present stillness speak to rebuke my sacrilege. Standing in the road quite motionless, I held my breath for a moment and listened with the dark world around, and as I stood there, awed and quieted by the noise borne of my great laugh, a strange and startling thing occurred. As I have said, no light save those behind in Portsmouth and that in the stars above was visible, when suddenly in the road before me there flashed forth what seemed a gigantic glow-worm, and the rays of this

enfolded me in their penetrating embrace until I stood bathed from head to foot in a golden sea of light. For fully a minute it held me so unswervingly, glowing in the darkness a brilliant, flickering point of fire, and then as suddenly went out, emphasising the blackness of the night as my laughter had the silence of it. Instinctively I drew my feet from the bed of mud in which they were sunken, and advanced slowly toward the spot this thing had occupied, and as I drew nearer I began to make out dimly a figure standing against a clump of bushes that grew along the roadside. This, at least, was something tangible and presumably human, so I called a halt and demanded gruffly (lest whoever it might be should think me frightened), who lay skulking there? For a moment there was no reply, and then came something that gave more astonishment even than the sudden light had done. For out of the grim, still night came a voice so clear and soft and unafraid that my head seemed to uncover of its own accord almost, and behold!—I stood there bowing before a lady!

“Come, good sir,” she said, and I could feel the smile accompanying. “You have kept me waiting long. I had nearly gone home without

your company, though that had been much to my discouragement."

"Mistress," I stammered in my surprise at this thing, "how could I keep you waiting here had I known you looked for me?"

"Eh," she cried, with some surprise, "not know? A tall man—well knit—neither young nor old—who will be courteous to you—rough perchance in appearance as though stained with travel——"

This she murmured as if conning over a lesson, bathing me meanwhile in that flood of light, which, now as I saw, was produced by a tiny lanthorn made in some strange fashion so that its rays could be thrown in one direction only, or darkened wholly at will. The scrutiny gave her apparent satisfaction, for she extinguished the light again and beckoned to me with her voice, as some few women are able to do.

"Sir," she said, "my father expects you yonder in Havant. I am not wholly acquainted with his counsels, yet had I supposed that his expectation had been with your understanding. However, it matters not. The question is, Will you come with me or not?"

Now I could see no more than the dim outline of her shape, and even this was confused by

the bungling cloak she wore. Yet so wonderful a quality had her voice that had she mentioned Hades as our destination rather than Havant, I needs must have given her my protection thither.

She said no more at first, however, but letting the light from her tiny lanthorn fall upon the road before us, she now set off at a pace with which I found it difficult to keep up. For her lightness of foot gave her great advantage over the heavy state of the ground, and she seemed to walk as easily over the stickiness of it as I might have done upon our hard New England shore. A quiet remark she made now and then for company, but mostly we went in silence until before us there began to loom faintly the gables of a tiny hamlet, nestling close to earth. Then she paused suddenly, and, with a little sound in her throat like the coming bud of mirth, she said to me:

“ It is kind of you, sir, to come with me so unquestioningly, since you knew not that you are anxiously expected ; but before we reach my father’s house and I no longer have the opportunity, I beg you grant me another favour. Sir, though my life is of the happiest, yet never until to-night have I known a man give way so

to laughter; I beg you, therefore, tell me what it was that tickled you."

I am a truthful man, as all my readers must have learned ere this, and also do I love to obey a lady, so thereupon did I pause beside her in the road and tell her how we three had come to England (though not our errand there), and the way of our reception in Portsmouth town, and my recent ejection from it. And although I told it well, as I make bold to say of myself (while there is no one to contradict me), it surprised me that while the memory of that scene causes the corners of my mouth to twitch until this day, my young companion looked upon it almost gravely, and I could see that her interest was centred more upon the bits I let fall concerning Hal and my lady than upon the matter of which she had questioned me.

But when I had finished my tale and she had taken a moment to think it over, she asked me to describe once more the townsmen who had been so rudely treated, and afterwards she told me that I had done well to escape as I had done, for these had been men of some importance in the town, and not likely to see the jest in the affair.

"And truly, sir, I see but little myself of it,"

she said, "for surely no man in his own name had the right to so heavily chastise his fellows for mere conversation over matters they do not comprehend. And yet I doubt not that Master Potts (for such is the name of him who threw the ale, and he is one of the Town Council), I doubt not that he was a ludicrous sight!" And so she laughed a little and paused and laughed again.

Yet I could not help but feel a little rebuked by the way in which she had looked at it, and so tried to assure her that there was fault in my way of narrating, after all, and that had her own eyes seen the thing, she, too, would have given way to merriment. But when I had finished this explanation I noticed that she was not heeding me, for she made no answer save a little rippling flow of silver sound, and yet with this I felt rewarded. Then suddenly, as we stood there in the dark, there came crashing through the stillness, even as my laughter had lately done, the sound of a great bell ringing somewhere; and as the first stroke fell, the girl beside me grasped my arm, urging me hastily along through the vibrating air.

"I fear we have loitered somewhat," she said. "Your tale took longer than I thought,

and was most diverting; sometime you must tell me more if I can gain the opportunity, but now we must waste no more time."

"And the bell?" I asked, for it still was clanging harshly.

"It means only that the time is midnight," she answered. "My father rings it with his own hand once at noon, again at midnight, that the people may know the hour. He will be sorry that I have stayed so long. Come."

We seemed, as nearly as I could make out, to be skirting along the side of a high wall, and presently we came to a halt beside a narrow archway, and my companion gave me her lantern to hold while she fitted a clumsy key into its socket. A moment later we had passed through the doorway and were standing together in what seemed a narrow garden, while a serving man whom I had not noticed entered after us and disappeared in the darkness toward the house. The bell still rang heavily overhead, so that words between us were unavailing, but my guide, laying her hand once more upon my arm, led me up the pathway. At the end of this we mounted a low flight of steps, and taking another key from her girdle, she unlocked a door and motioned me to pass within, and we



traversed hastily some three or four small rooms and passageways lighted only by the lanthorn which the lady carried, and empty save for some common furniture. The bell meanwhile had ceased its noisy clamour, and as we reached the door leading from the room that showed most recent sign of occupancy, the girl paused and listened for a moment, and then knocked softly at it. Getting no response, however, she threw back the hanging and peered within. The room, like the others, was empty, and this seemed satisfactory to her, for she entered quickly, holding back the hanging for me to follow. The place was somewhat larger than the other rooms through which we had passed, and lighted by a couple of candles. A few embers, too, glowed in the great fireplace, and drawn close to this was a round table, whereon reposed the remnants of a frugal supper. In the ingle-nook was a great hound, who rose and came sedately forward to rub his nose against his mistress.

"Sir," said my guide, "will you rest you here a moment and stir these embers until I can provide a better fire and refreshment? First I must go and find my father, and Tom will bear you company."

She motioned towards the hound, and hearing

himself discussed, he turned his grave eyes in my direction and gently swayed his tail. And then when his mistress had left us together, he came and laid his great head upon my knee. To have a strange dog offer friendship is, I believe, the greatest compliment a man receives. For while in the charity of his heart a dog may sometimes accept a bit of flattery rather than offend the offerer of it, give it he will never do, and so all his ways are honest. I caressed my new friend, therefore, with gratitude for his kindness and thanked him audibly for it with sincerity and truth. We were alone together thus while a tall clock in the corner ticked away the half hour, and then Tom set his ears and I saw his tail a-tremble. A heavy step had sounded in the passageway, and I arose in readiness to receive my host. The next moment the door towards which I had directed my gaze swung open vigorously, and the hound sprang forward with a joyous bay of welcome.

## CHAPTER XI.

FIVE feet ten in my stockinged feet, I felt almost a pigmy by the side of the man who now confronted me; and yet as he passed through the doorway, and stood with his figure sharply outlined against the whiteness of the wall, I saw that it was not so much in mere proportion as in the way of carriage which gave him advantage over me. For an air of some conscious, hidden strength which was with him seemed to give a grandeur to his figure, and he so filled the place with his presence that for an instant I felt crowded almost for room. I know not in what manner he was dressed, save that a peaked cap sat upon his head, for though I saw him so many times thereafter, his face it was that always dominated me and the beauty of his physique. Sackcloth might have garbed him, and his bearing would have lent to it a grace another man could not impart to velvet. And yet, save for the cap, which was of a crimson colour, the impression lingers with me now that his habit was of the simplest cut and somewhat sombre.

His head, as he stood and looked me quietly over, sat with an air of simple, steady dignity upon his shoulders. His hair, unlike the fashion of the day, was cropped short, and in it, and in the close set of his beard and clipped moustachios, there was a plentiful sprinkling of grey. His skin had a soft glow like the face of a girl, and his eyes, though they seemed to possess a trick of piercing to the kernel all that they looked upon, had in them a light of calmness and power, which before had been strange to my comprehension. And though it was but the space of a minute, perhaps, that we stood thus confronting each other, in that brief time I knew this man was my friend, and felt my life so much enriched by knowledge of it.

“You are welcome to my house,” he said, and his voice was like his daughter’s strangely. “You are welcome, and I must beg you to overlook my tardiness in coming to you. A supper shall be provided you and a fire of more cheerful proportions, and perchance also a coat, for I see you are without one, thanks to your unpleasant scuffle, of which I have learned something. And now, Tom, my boy, go and bring someone that hath hands, if no more intelligence than thyself!”

The hound, with a sidelong glance at his master, walked steadily through the doorway, and my host, with a faint smile on his lips, seated himself before the fire and motioned me to follow his example. Presently a serving man, with his eyes blinking over an unfinished nap, entered with an armful of wood, and behind him again a maid came, bearing a dish of smoking meat and a flagon of ale, and these she set before me daintily. Last of all strode the hound, going first to his master for approval's ready caress, and then, with a gentleman's courtesy for the stranger, to myself.

When we were once more alone together my host turned to me and said:

"Until you have refreshed your inner man, I will not trouble you either to ask or answer questions. But as the night is far spent and to-morrow will doubtless need you elsewhere, I must beg you to use what expedition is practicable and to let me know when you are ready."

Now having so lately supped, and started forth in active exercise before digestion had time to operate, my appetite was wanting for the food that stood before me, and still I made some show of storing a few mouthfuls in defer-

ence to the hospitality which offered it. My host meanwhile had seated himself before the fire with his broad back in my direction, and had seemingly become lost in a deep revery and quite oblivious to my proceedings. So I bestowed a portion of my supper upon the hound that the dish might have an emptier appearance, and then made several ineffectual attempts to attract attention to the fact that I had finished by coughs and hemmings and throat clearings, and when these proved of no avail, I arose and walked around in front of my silent entertainer. Even then he did not notice me, but sat with his eyes turned inward, and his mind apparently far away. I touched him quietly upon the sleeve, therefore, and said :

“ Sir, I am attending you.”

I think it is rarely but the guilty man or the coward who starts when his secret train of thought is interrupted, and this man was neither one of these. He looked at me quickly with his quiet smile, welcoming me once more into his realm of thought as well as body, and for this I grew to like him better still.

“ You have been rapid, sir,” he said, and glanced upon my empty plate and then at the hound, who was licking his great chops; but no

smile curled the lips of this gentleman, yet did I know that he read my small deception. "You have been rapid, though I trust not to the detriment of your comfort. I am ever loath to hasten the rite of hospitality, but when needs must it is best to waste no time in vain excuses. I will tell you, therefore, before I proceed with my own business with you, how and why you have been brought hither. But first of all should I like to hear what name you bear."

Now, this surprised me not a little, for I had the impression that in some way all myself was known to him who had so strangely looked out for my arrival. Yet I told him that my name was John Hadder, until lately skipper of a good Cape fishing smack, and hoping still to return thereto.

"Then John," said he, cordially, "we are friends, and I will be as frank with you. For my name is John also, with the poor appendage of Booker following. Until now I have lived at Hadley, and my late business hath brought me hither for a little. Men call me a philosopher; a reader of the stars; a physician with strange power to heal; a magician; even by the rustics here about am I called a sorcerer. But also have they no fear of me, for my sorceries work

no harm. That my study is the broad map of the universe is true, and also is it true that the glittering lamps which shine at night above us have much to tell me of life that is and is to come. And through them did I learn the coming of one in whom I have an interest from over seas. For a week have my messengers been in Portsmouth watching the incoming ships, and but this very night I learned of your arrival. From what sea you would come I knew not, for the stars kept much of their deep knowledge hid from me, so I could watch only and wait. In each avenue that leads shorewards from Havant one of my household hath been posted, and these brought me tidings of your intentions, and what things were happening to you. And so when you fell among thieves at the 'Red Lion' to-night, when you ran in your escape with little idea of aim or purpose, one of my messengers preceded you, and, knowing the road, made better progress than yourself. A good hour before you, did he tell me of your approach, and your person did he describe to me, so that others of my house should know you; and so I led you hither."

"But the lady, sir?" I stammered. "For so young and beautiful a lady——"



“To watch in the middle of the night is strange, you think?” he interrupted. “My daughter hath yet to learn the meaning of the word ‘fear,’ so none will stoop to harm her. And knowing that the lightness of youth had passed you by, and that your nature was honest, I sent my sweet Pen to bring you the more hastily to me, lest you should suspect the good faith of a serving man. Yet that you think me not foolhardy, I will say that had need arisen, there were hands in plenty to lend her swift assistance, although she herself knew it not. And now, by your kind leave and patience, I will explain something of my business with you. You must know that some months ago a lady came to me begging that I would cast her horoscope for her in order that the knowledge of it might perchance help her out of many present difficulties. Although she came with her face hidden in her mask, and scarcely spoke for fear her voice should reveal to me her true identity (for she had thought her name and station securely hidden from my knowledge), yet did I know her well. For to that strange and subtle thing, the human voice, have I given some attention, and the disguise she strove to effect intensified the quality of hers. So it happened

that while it is no part of my life to pry into the secrets of the everlasting stars for sake of gold or reputation, yet for reasons which I beg your leave to retain, I was willing to read what chance in life was to be given to this lady. The heavens, when I searched them for her story, revealed two courses open to her, the choice, indeed, that is allotted most of us. Of these one led by slow degrees to humiliation, neglect, forgottenness. The second, by a series of bold strokes, and after a short period of trial and privation, led her towards renown and temporal power, and the gratification of both her love and her ambition; and the price of this was to be her honour. Yet in this second course, also, was given a choice of conduct. For she would have it in her power, when a critical moment should arrive, to make a noble sacrifice of self to honesty, and so to live her life unacquainted with remorse. These things I explained to her, showing her how she had but to live on as she had lived, in order to meet the first proffered fate. How the second involved a long journey across the seas in search of something unknown, and as yet unknowable; and how the outcome of this lay in her own heart, whose workings none might read save herself alone. When I

had finished, the lady thanked me and went away, and for a time I thought little more about her. Days, even weeks passed, and once more in my studies I came upon her track through the skies. That the second course had been chosen by her I learned, and now I found her fate mixed strangely with that of one I loved. And so I set myself to watch, and presently I knew this lady drew near again to England, and that with her was that other one. And so did I set my men at Portsmouth, feeling that it was here the lady once more would touch the land, and came myself nearby to watch events. And so, Master John, I was quickly told of your arrival since you come in company with this lady, and him in whom your interest lies, namely, the young lad whom you left with her in Portsmouth. And now I judge it not unfair to beg of you your history and his, for though my interest is great in him, yet thus far is my knowledge small, and I assure you that my aim in seeking it is one that will not harm you."

Now, this I felt to be so true, and belief in his intended kindness was become so perfect, that had he asked me, I had confessed to him any sin or virtue I had known myself to possess. But having no deeds which were either black or

white enough to prove a test case, I began, as he had wished, with Hal and his first sad loss at sea, nor did I pause until I brought myself to where he now beheld me.

The light was struggling through the narrow embrasures of the windows by the time I finished, and in the house were distant sounds of life awakening. When my host had thanked me with his air of quiet courtesy for my candour with him, he insisted that I stretch myself upon the settle for an hour, while he thought over the tale I had imparted, and though no thought of sleep had I, nor desire for it while I talked with him, yet now I found my eyelids heavy. And so he left me without a word of comment, but with a blanket to cover my coatless back, and a cushioned bench to stretch upon. And when, an hour later, he returned, to my chagrin a difficulty arose in waking me.

## CHAPTER XII.

WHY a man should take shame to himself for giving way to honest, well-earned sleep, is a thing I cannot see the wisdom in, and yet at the moment of waking from a nap that has come undesired, there seems no deeper crime committable than that of having yielded to the temptation of it. So now, when Mr. Booker, having shaken me vigorously by the arm, stood gazing down at me as I applied my fists to my rebellious eyelids, no thief detected in the discharge of his profession could have felt more crestfallen than John Hadder.

“Again must I waive all rite of hospitality, John,” my host said, smilingly, “for a few moments hence must see you started on your road elsewhere; and now what time remains I shall beg again your close attention.”

I got upon my feet, therefore, and stood before him while he put a hand on either of my shoulders, and as he spoke looked me steadily in the eye.

“While you slept, John, I have given the

matter of our conversation much thought," he began, "and although I cannot clearly see what will be the final outcome of the matter, yet are two chances of it plain to me. Before noon to-day we shall know which one of these we are to look to, and so may lay our plans for action. It is, for reasons which some day I shall explain to you, my wish to aid him whom you call Hal, to know his rightful name and station in the world. Will you trust to my guidance, John, and follow my advice in the matter?"

"Sir," I answered, readily, "I know you wish to aid me and that no man is better able."

He smiled at this, though I could see no reason for it, and replied:

"As you will, then, John. And my first advice to you is that you listen well and heed what few instructions I have to offer you. When you have left this house, which shortly you must do, you will find yourself upon a road that after a mile or so becomes the highway between Portsmouth and London. Along this you will do well to proceed with haste, for if I judge rightly, a coach will be at the intersection of the roads an hour or less from this time. Within this coach will be a passenger, perchance there will be two, who are known to

you. In the latter case you will do well to join yourself to the travellers, with no word of your interview with me. But should there be but one, I advise you to return hither with all haste, having entered into no controversy, given way to no outburst of anger, and revealed no hint as to your destination. And now you will have barely time to reach the high road, for I doubt not that the coach is well on its way toward London. Soon we shall meet again, perchance this very day, but always will I watch events and do my best to aid you."

As he finished speaking he had gently forced me to the door, and now opened it and pushed me through, as he did so calling to the hound and giving him, more by gesture than by word of mouth, command to escort me to the gate. Himself stayed behind in the passageway, watching me with a kindly smile, as I saw when I turned to look upon him at the turn of the stairs. The hound meanwhile stalked solemnly before, waiting at the door for my hand to open it, and presently I found myself once more in the little garden through which I had passed the preceding night with my fair guide. Here Tom paused, while his tail gently invited thanks for his patronage, and here once more I found

his mistress waiting. This time she wore no cloak, and her head was bare, so that for the first time I saw her face uncovered. Now, of describing that face I am not capable, and indeed I have no mind to try lest a false impression of it be created by my bungling. Some of you who read this tale remember it, perchance, as it was when years had lightly scored it, and more have seen the portrait of it which Sir Peter Lely made for him who was afterwards her husband. And yet in comparing the various impressions left by these recollections, I find but little correspondence between them, save that all agree in declaring that never before or since had they beheld a face which they would wish to look at always. And so when she smiled at me in the garden, I pulled off my cap and bowed low before her, but my tongue was useless even for "good-morning."

"My father hath kept you a close prisoner, sir," she said, "and now with almost the first streak of dawn you are hastening away, and I have no time to hear more of your story. I would I might hear you laugh again—the sound lingers still in my ears and is right merry music! Do all your countrymen across the sea possess so sweet a gift? Yet I must not detain you



with questions, since when my father speeds a guest it is for some good reason. I came but to hand you something to serve as breakfast until a better chance is given you. So now farewell, and may your journey be a safe and pleasant one, as befits so gay a traveller."

Again I bowed, but still my tongue was silent, and presently I found myself standing in the lane outside the garden wall, and in my hand a dainty packet folded about in snowy linen.

Somewhat stupidly I started on in the direction my feet selected, for my head was filled with an uncertain desire to attempt a serenade of unmeaning guffaws, with which I might hope to please my sweet mistress, who watched behind the gate; and yet, as I say, I stumbled on. I discovered, when my mind unfolded sufficiently to take note of my surroundings, that I walked upon a roughly paved road which ran for some distance under an avenue of scrubby oak trees. The little village of Havant lay slightly to the left and back of me, while the road I was to travel stretched long and straight in front. Although in the dim morning light Portsmouth was not discernible, the smell of the sea gave me a comfortable knowledge of companionship, and I swung along briskly,

meeting now and then with a countryman going to his labour or driving a beast or two for sale in the market town; and for my greeting I got in reply a stare of mingled curiosity and distrust, which always dampened my ardour until again the hope of better luck arose. It was not long before I came to the high road of which Mr. Booker had told me, and having first examined the deep and sticky mud for any signs of wheels gone lately over, and finding nothing to reward my search, I sat me down upon a great stone to await the coming of the coach from Portsmouth, and to examine into that little packet of mine. It contained no more than some bits of bread and meat, but these were so daintily put together that a man's appetite must arise at sight of them and yet refrain for shame of the very grossness of it. But when I had tasted, I took a second bite, that left a great hole in my refreshment, and five minutes afterward, when I fingered the linen through for more, behold, the cloth was empty! So I looked up foolishly at a thrush who was hopping for crumbs on a twig near by, and smiled, and then again more broadly, and finally, for no earthly reason save the delight my breakfast had afforded me, and a wish I felt to thank the

giver of it, I laughed again till the thrush piped up in sympathy.

Then, while I was finishing by degrees this sweet diversion, from far down the road I heard the sound of shouting, and running out to see the cause of it, I made out by the straining of my eyes the dim outline of some heavy object lumbering slowly in my direction. As it drew nearer I saw that it was a carriage drawn by four panting horses, whose combined effort, though goaded continually by the whip and oaths of the post-boys, was barely able to drag it through the mud of the road. It came towards me, therefore, no faster than a man of ordinary muscle might have walked, and the panting of the poor beasts was plainly audible forty yards or more away. I went back to my stone to watch them, and as they came within speaking distance, they reached a spot in the road which seemed at first almost fatal to their safety. For in the bed of mud the off wheels sank below the hubs, while those on the near side seemed to rest upon a securer foundation. This caused the coach to careen to an alarming extent, while the horses, after a first mad effort to drag it through, lapsed into a kind of apathetic discouragement, which neither the threats of the

driver nor the fulfillment of them could move them from. Now, in all the little time which had elapsed since I had received my instruction from the man who had so unexpectedly proffered me his friendship, it is a strange thing that my mind seemed to be inactive concerning the things which he had told me. Without comment I had accepted them, and thought of acting on my own account or of unheeding his advice had not, I think, once entered my mind. I had not speculated even as to what the outcome of my morning's walk was to be, nor had I wondered whom this coach I went to intercept was to contain. Haply, I had a dim feeling that it would be Hal, although I knew my lady's coach was not to start so early by two hours, and yet I had been content to wait the outcome of the morning quietly, although this inaction was not my usual habit.

But now, seeing from my stone how the wheels of the coach were momentarily sinking deeper in the ooze, while the drivers sprang to the ground to put the strength of shoulder to them, I started on a run to do what I was able to assist them, and as I came alongside this landship in distress, there issued from its vague interior a voice crying out in angry tones a

command that the door be opened, and giving opinion of the post-boys in no complimentary terms. So I left the men, who were so intent upon the peril of their craft that they heeded not any peril of its occupant, to do for it what they were able without my strength to aid them, and ran around the firmer side of ground. By this time the coach was lying nearly on its side, so that I was forced to clamber up with the help of the wheels, and found some difficulty in wrenching open the door from the position this state of things had placed me in. Stopped as it was on one side by the sea of mud in which the window lay, and on the other by my own bulk, the interior of the carriage was so dark that at first I could distinguish nothing excepting a confusion of human members which seemed to have no common meeting place. I braced myself as best I could, however, thrusting my hands into the darkness of the hole, and felt them quickly grasped by others. This was all I needed, and a moment later my lady stood upon the great stone by the roadside, where neither the splashing mud could fall upon her, nor the kicking animals do her injury.

“ It seems to be your mission in life, Master

John," she said coolly, "to rescue me from perilous positions, and mine to be indebted to you therefor. So it seems you have escaped your jailers, and set out for London in advance of your late companions."

"What mean you by jailers, madam?" I asked, for the word struck me strangely, and I knew not what thought was in her mind.

"Do you think the fame of your disgraceful brawl at the inn is silent?" she questioned me in reply. "We heard you were in custody; the assault of three of Portsmouth's aldermen is no such small matter. I can but congratulate you, therefore, upon your escape."

"Madam," I cried, for her calm air of indifference astonished me, and the coldness in her eyes, "Madam, that I escaped is evident, though in custody I never was. Meanwhile, what have you done with Hal?"

Again as she stood there upon the stone, calmly straightening her ruffled plumage and brushing flakes of mud with her glove from the cloak my Betty had provided her, that unaccountable feeling of distrust and repulsion with which I so many times had associated her, and as many times forgotten, came over me, and I

stood mutely awaiting my answer, and fearing I knew not what. So much concerned did she seem with the arrangement of her costume that at first she had no time to notice me, but presently she looked up, and coldly met the questioning of my eyes.

"Your Hal," she said, while her lip curled slightly upward, "is a young gentleman of whom I can tell you nothing. It is true that until this morning I had expected his company and protection upon the last stage of this journey. At both ends of it he hath failed me, and as he likes it thus, I think my obligation to him paid. For yourself, since you have but now rendered me a further favour, I will say that when I saw your friend last, he was starting upon an undertaking which had for its object your deliverance from the jail in Portsmouth, wherein you were supposed to be sojourning. But as I could no longer delay my return to London in deference to your affairs, and as you did not appear at the hour I had fixed upon for starting, I was forced to depart without your Hal, and more than this I cannot tell you."

"And so," I said as calmly as the anger that boiled within me would allow (for I doubted not

that this was a trick to rid her of our presence), "and so, madam, it seems that you have basely deserted him!"

"Keep your temper and your scorn for future use, Master John," she replied, throwing back her head, while her eyes looked me disdainfully up and down. "Occasion may perchance arise when they will avail you more. And mark you well that no man hath yet with impunity called me base, though some indeed have tried. As for my having deserted your Hal, it appears that instead he hath deserted me, since he knew well the urgent desire I was under to depart, and yet did not see fit to conform to it. And so, Master John, since I am neither in the mood, nor have I the leisure for argument, and as I perceive the coach is once more righted, as a last favour I will beg you to assist me to my place therein, for I have no mind to wade this sea of mud."

I think it was the coolness with which she spoke that maddened me more than the words she used, for she seemed to hold me in too great contempt to arouse either her anger or her interest now. Controlling myself with an effort, therefore, I stood quite still before her, and forced my eyes to meet her own unflinch-



ingly, though it was always difficult for me to compass this.

“Madam,” I said as steadily as I was able, for the strong man does not lift his voice in anger, “let us, I pray you, understand each other here and now. As the matter looks to me, you have hastened away from Portsmouth, while, as you thought, both Hal and myself were occupied unwittingly in other matters; you have hastened away in order that you might journey on to London alone, leaving my boy, whom you enticed hither with tempting promises, to shift for himself as best he can. Is it your intention to cast him off for good, or is he expected or permitted to follow you to London as soon as his natural anxiety for his oldest friend is satisfied?”

She looked at me and laughed.

“Truly, you are superb, Master John!” she replied. “A fortune awaits you on the London stage, and the court shall know of your ability. Try the tragic vein, John, but advertise it ‘Comedy.’ And as to what I may do or expect I cannot say, only that I look for nothing from your favourite further since he hath abandoned me. Meanwhile, my coach is waiting. Is it your gracious pleasure to assist me to it?”

"Then, madam, I understand that you wash your hands of us?" I demanded.

"It were better for my hands so surely," she answered lightly, "and in a moment more, if you will not assist me, I must perforce call a post-boy. Yet are your garments cleaner, John, and the smell more to my liking."

It was more than I could bear.

"Madam," I cried, "I warn you. You have led us too long a chase to shake us easily. Whatever your motive may be, though you have never confided to us your name or rank, yet I know one who is perchance well acquainted with both, who is our friend and will not fail us. Follow you to London we shall, and find you we as certainly shall do. Madam, you have my warning."

In my anger and excitement I waved my arm in the direction of Havant, and had the sorry satisfaction of seeing a look of surprise leap into her eyes.

"Ah, Master John," she said, "so your powerful ally dwells in that direction? I trust for your sake he may prove no less powerful than you suppose. For the last time, I offer you the privilege of putting me into my coach."

The coach having escaped its peril, had drawn

up beside us, and the post-boys were waiting somewhat impatiently the end of our colloquy. They now called to madam, begging her to once more resume her place, since even now there would be difficulty in making the first stage of the journey before nightfall, and it would be unsafe to risk further loss of time. Seeing nothing to be gained for Hal by detaining her, I once more lifted her in my arms, therefore, and without a word deposited her in the place from which I so lately had been her rescuer. For this she thanked me graciously, as though we parted in the greatest amity, and from the window of the coach, as it once more started on its lumbering way, she smiled and nodded to me, while I waved my hat as another man might have shaken his fist.

For a few minutes I stood still in the oozing mud, gazing after her, while vicious thoughts ran riot in my mind, and then, when a bend in the road hid the carriage from my sight, I turned about and began plodding sullenly towards Portsmouth. For thought of my poor boy, distracted between his desire to find myself and surprise at madam's desertion of him, filled me with such desire to unravel the matter for him as far as I was able, that thought of going

any other way save that which led to him never once occurred to me, nor did the difficulty I might encounter in once more appearing in the town of Portsmouth present itself to my mind, until I came within sight of its ditches. And then I spoke unkindly to myself, and said: "A head full of less wisdom never was carried by a man, John Hadder," and like a guilty man I hastened to put a clump of bushes between myself and the Portsmouth population. For so must many an honest man demean himself for the championing of another's cause. And then as my mind relaxed somewhat, for the first time the memory of Mr. Booker's parting advice came back to me. Never once had thought of what he had said to me entered my head since my parting with madam, and now, with this memory of it, came shame and confusion for the way in which I had disregarded it. "Enter into no controversy," he had said, and while chance for this was given me, I had done nothing but make the most of the opportunity. "Do not give way to anger," he had said, and for two hours past my blood had boiled within me. "Should but one passenger be in the coach, come back at once to me," he had told me, and here was I within speaking distance of

Portsmouth. Plainly had my kind friend foreseen the likelihood of madam's departure alone, and as plainly did he know better how to cope with the outcome than myself. And yet had I tried to compass all this business by myself, and so, no doubt, had put our case into a tighter tangle. Yet I hoped that there still was time to rectify in some part the blunder I had made. No one from the town had seen me save some boys who were looking for smaller marsh-birds, and who had taken little note of me (though I had thought to see them take to their heels in eagerness to report me to the authorities), and so with a sigh for Hal, yet deeming this the better way since I now was sailing under other orders, I set out upon my third journey along that heavy road.

The sun by this time was high up in the heavens, and the sparkle of the distant sea sent me welcome messages of encouragement which did much, each time I turned to gaze upon it, to cheer my flagging spirits, and by the time I reached the pathway that led towards Havant, hope once more was springing green within me. As I walked along, intent upon my thought and upon finding the drier places in the marshy ground, my eyes came suddenly upon a shadow

that fell across the path, and at the same moment a gentle whinny brought me to a standstill. Close in front of me, so close, in fact, that another step or two must have caused a collision, stood a small black horse, blocking the narrow way completely. His nose was lying close to the ground, and the bridle had slipped to his delicate ears, causing him to shake his head impatiently. Upon his back was a light saddle with the stirrups dangling, and his jet-black mane and tail were cropped close in a fashion that was new to me. I looked about me for the rider of this dainty beast, but the path was empty as far as I could see, though it was lined on either side with undergrowth and bushes. So here, I thought, was a chance of speed presented me direct by Providence, and who was I, to turn my back on such good fortune? Horseman I was none, but in that respect, as in many another, no man hath ever doubted his ability until the contrary is proven. The beast gave no sign of restiveness as I approached him, but merely raised his graceful head and looked at me with a kind of melancholy interest in his eyes, which afterwards I knew had been for pity. I slipped the bridle into its place, therefore, confidently, while the little animal stood

like a stone during my clumsy attempts at getting my leg across him. Having succeeded in this finally, however, I gave a merry chuckle over my run of luck, and pulled upon the bridle to turn my charger's head towards Havant, slapping him at the same time smartly on the hip with the flat of my hand to hearten him.

"Go along, my beauty," I cried. "A quick journey we shall have, and then a good dinner for both of us."

But he seemed not to understand my patronage, and though by dint of some tugging I managed to turn aside his head, yet no more of him budged from the stand he had taken, and neither words nor slaps could quicken him. I pressed my heels into his sides, as I had seen a spurred rider do, and coaxed and cajoled and threatened him without avail. And then when all had failed to move him, the idea came to me that perchance nothing but the spur itself was understood by him, so I drew my knife and pricked him gently in the side. The next minute I was flying through the air, and a soft bed of mud was fortunately provided for my occupancy. Dazed with the suddenness of the occurrence, I picked myself up slowly, scarce knowing what it was that had brought the thing

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about. The brute still stood in the same pensive, gentle attitude, with head down and eyes gazing innocently upward. I knew not what revenge to put upon him, so I approached him cautiously (though he made no motion to dissuade me), and shook my fist in his hypocritical face.

"Sir," I cried, "you are the devil! If you were a man I would thrash you well for this. As it is, get out of my way."

I made a cut at him with a stick I had picked up, and at that moment there came a sound of crackling twigs behind me, and before I could turn, a hand was laid upon my shoulder, while the strength of it spun me back so sharply that I barely escaped a second trial of the softness of my bed of mud.

"And so you were endeavouring to be off with some property to which you have no title," said a voice whose curious foreign accent struck with familiarity upon my ear. "The attempt, sir, is one at highway robbery, and the penalty is the gallows!"

Facing about, I saw before me the gentleman of the ingle-nook, he who was responsible for all the happenings of the previous night, and for whom I had so lately risked my liberty.



"Young sir," I retorted, for my blood was up and my temper held but little more endurance, "have a care how you bring charges against one who has counter charges plenty! There are three men in Portsmouth this morning who would give much to learn your whereabouts, if I mistake not."

A quick reply sprang to his lips, but in the midst of it he paused and looked at me more closely. Then suddenly his face broadened into a smile, and he came towards me with outstretched hands.

"Monsieur," he cried, "through your mask of mud I did not recognise you. I trust the excuse will explain the rudeness of my behaviour and that you suffer no hurt from the fall my Beauty gave you?"

"I have suffered enough at your hands, sir," I replied sulkily, "to wish that our first meeting had never taken place, and that this may be our last one. Meanwhile I have urgent business. May I trouble you to let me pass?"

"Eh, Monsieur Spit-Fire, not so fast, if you please!" he cried gaily; "you must tell me first how ended the little affair of last night."

Now, it was a strange thing, but true, that

recollection of that scene had so curious an effect upon my humour that I could not think of it and retain at the same time thoughts of anger. So I replied to my questioner, that if he chose to walk beside me, I would give him the knowledge which he sought, and very willingly he assented to this arrangement.

So we walked along together very amicably, the little horse following his master like a dog, and to my dismay, when we had skirted along the village of Havant, and once more I saw the garden gate appearing, it suddenly dawned upon me that this stranger had drawn from me not only an account of the manner of my escape from the predicament his folly of the night had placed me in, but also something concerning Hal and my lady, of whom he asked many skillfully contrived questions which I did not suspect till afterwards.

But when the gate came into sight, I drew myself up sharply, and exclaimed:

“Here we part, for my business lies near by, and I have no further time for dallying.”

“I will detain you only long enough, monsieur,” he replied good-humouredly, “to thank you for the help you gave me in keeping your somewhat broad back against the door and for

your pleasant company. In time 'I, in turn, may serve you.'

And as I waited at the gate, having left him where the path diverged to meet it, I saw him mount his Beauty, and wave me a gay farewell as he rode rapidly off down the road that led to the London highway.

## CHAPTER XIII.

A LEARNED man once told me that there is in the air about us a quality so sensitive to our thoughts and feelings, silently bearing them abroad and communicating them to our fellows, that we diffuse, as it were, as we walk through life, an atmosphere of individuality, on which is writ, for those who know how to decipher it, the record of our inmost being. How that may be I know not, but this I know: that joy and sorrow both have each a way of sending messengers before them, to warn us of their coming. And although this is in a manner done beyond our comprehension, yet safe it is to count upon.

So now, as I stood waiting for the gate to open, the sudden knowledge of a pleasure coming rushed in upon me, though not at all was I prepared for Hal. For it was he who opened the gate for me, and laughed to see my astonishment.

“ Well, John, it’s good indeed to see you,” he cried, as he dragged me within the wall.

"It seems a month since we parted company, instead of last night. We have been watching your approach from the tower yonder, and have some curiosity concerning your companion."

"Eh, Hal, my boy," I said, "there's questions plenty between us. The gentleman I met in the path below was he who put me in such a scrape by his pleasantry of last night. And now for my turn. How came you to this place, Hal?"

"That will I answer for you, Master Hal," said a voice behind us, and turning about, I faced the grave and kindly eyes of Mr. Booker, who was regarding us with his quiet smile. "Come up both of you to my privacy, for I have something to say to you and perhaps a plan to offer."

He led us across the garden, and through the house to the room where he had received me the night before, begging us to attend him closely; and as Hal seated himself near me I noticed, for the first time, how white and weary was his dear young face.

"Master Hadder," began our host, "from my watch-tower yonder your young friend can tell you that the country round about is visible for many miles, and so since the sun dispelled

the mist this morning, I have kept an eye upon your doings. I saw the upset of the coach, and your gallant rescue of the lady, and from your subsequent proceedings I could imagine something of what afterward occurred. That you did not follow strictly the advice I gave I have surmised, since I saw you enjoying the pleasure of argument. And yet it is my wish and intention still to aid you if I may. Your return towards Portsmouth, and your meeting and parting with a strange young gentleman upon the road, I have also noted, and although you have told us what relation he bears to the affair of last night, and I have besides an excellent idea of his person, still I would ask a question or two concerning him. Did you note anything in his speech which seemed strange or un-English?"

"He is no Englishman, sir," I answered readily. "He addressed me always as 'Monsieur,' and he hath a trick of courtesy and sham deference which is strange to us."

"And did you notice if his face bore sign of a sword-cut?"

"Sir," I replied, "there is a small mark, now that I come to think of it, upon his right cheek, though it is scarcely noticeable."

Mr. Booker was silent for a moment, as it

seemed being deeply engaged in thought, and then he asked the question that I dreaded:

“ Master John, did anything concerning your companions, or the nature of your business, escape you ? ”

And in shame for my carelessness I hung my head and answered:

“ Sir, I must confess to you that this young gentleman drew from me a description of my lady, and also, I fear, did I let slip a word or two concerning the manner in which she came among us, but I said nothing, as I remember it, of the hopes we have for Hal.”

Perchance I had looked for some scathing reply, or at least for the rebuke of a just impatience, but as yet I did not know this man. Instead, he looked at me with his quiet smile, which held more power in it than the fierceness of another man, and said:

“ Well, John, spilt milk is not the thing to cry over, even while we do what we can towards wiping up the drops. I think but little harm is done, and let us not look for any. But you think it time, no doubt, that your natural curiosity should have some satisfaction. You are wondering how our young friend hath found his way hither. It is a simple answer, Last

night while you slept here on the bench, seeing (from my own knowledge of affairs and from your confidence in me) how matters were like to go, I dispatched two of my men to Portsmouth, who had little difficulty in finding this young gentleman. And when they told him that they knew exactly where yourself was hidden, and when he discovered that while he was pursuing his search for you, madam had taken advantage of his absence to leave the 'Red Lion' without his company, he readily followed my men hither, and had but just arrived when you met monsieur in the path below."

"A simple matter, if you like, sir," I cried, for his kindness touched me, "but one for which I thank you, and will strive to repay you somewhat by giving better attention to your future counsels."

"Let it pass, let it pass, John," he answered. "We shall see what occasion may require of you. And now for some refreshment, while I tell you what small plans I have laid for you."

Two serving men had entered while he spoke, and were busily laying the table with a plain repast, and with them came Tom, the hound, who gave me welcome recognition. When the men were gone, we drew up to the table and



Mr. Booker began to lay his plan before us, while Hal, as he listened, made dismal attempts at eating, and I stowed away a goodly dinner. For not even love for Betty (although, to be sure, my course of love had run smoothly, save for the bad taste Mistress Holmes had shown in the matter of men), not even love for Betty, I say, had ever caused desertion of appetite with me. So I attacked my dinner with a will, and at the same time I listened and felt my heart strain itself in pity for the trouble in Hal's young eyes, and between times I cursed my lady inwardly.

"Doubtless you have not done wondering," Mr. Booker began, "how it is that you have so suddenly fallen into my hands, who am a stranger to you, so far as your knowledge of me goes, although something of the reason of it have I explained to you first, John, and later to this young gentleman while you have been absent; and now, for the time, I shall ask you to be satisfied with my assurance that I have only your interest at heart in all I do for you, and that for Hal I have desire for a true advancement. Once I knew someone who was like you, Hal, in face and form, but whether in mind as well how can I judge so quickly? Will

you trust me, therefore, and follow the plans I have contrived for you ?”

Hal answered quickly, “ Yes,” and for a moment Mr. Booker looked at his white young face, and in his eyes I thought was a kind of longing and a loving pity for my boy that drew me nearer to the man, and made me vow within me then and there that I would let him guide me wholly.

“ It seems probable,” he continued, with his eyes still fixed on Hal, “ that she whom you call ‘ my lady ’ hath determined upon a course of action in which there is no place for you, and that so you can look for no assistance from her further. She warned you many times, as you have told me, that this might come to pass, and it shows the conflict of her heart for good or evil. That the weaker part of her nature hath triumphed, as I told her might happen when she came for advice to me before her journey, is to be deplored, but chiefly, perhaps, for her own sake, and this we cannot help. And so since Hal’s first ally hath failed him, I offer myself instead. Any certain knowledge (as far as material proof may go) of him, I have not; but my heart tells me that I know his features, and long have the heavens warned me of his

coming. Nay, Hal, for a little longer must I beg your patience, since men demand a more tangible proof, and we must get your father's sword before your case can come before His Majesty. And so, for the present, I have made one or two arrangements for you, which I hope you will be glad to follow. Although, John, from what I have lately seen of you, I judge that in horsemanship you are scarcely so well accomplished as in the management of more seaworthy craft (and from our young friend's up-bringing his case is doubtless the same as your own), yet have I given orders that a couple of good-tempered beasts be saddled for you, and on these I shall send you forth to London. A man who knows the roads, and the ways of the town as well, rides with you, and, cumbered with no useless trappings, you should arrive but little behind madam. A letter I have writ to a good friend of my own, and upon delivery of it I think he will give you hospitality for the present, or until I can learn how matters stand. Meanwhile, should you, on your way, again meet with the gentleman whose horse hath served you so scurvy a trick, John, I advise you to guard your tongue somewhat. For though M. Duval, as he is called, may be a cheerfully

disposed companion, and hath a kind of bravery, still his business is one which unfits him for the position of a trusted friend, and rumour of Master Hal's strange story might be too sweet a bit of gossip for him."

At news of our quick departure I had seen the light of relief spring into my dear boy's eyes, and having finished our meat, he arose in eagerness to be again upon the road over which my lady had preceded him, and was about to give expression of his thankfulness to our new found patron, when I interrupted him.

"Sir," I said, "my best way to thank you is to pay most close obedience to your wishes, and Hal's to follow in my footsteps. Yet, before we start upon our journey, one further favour have I to beg of you. May I not see your daughter, to tell her what delight was in the parcel which she had for me this morning?"

For an instant he glanced at Hal, and a look of sadness came into his eyes, I thought, and then, with his usual quiet smile, he said:

"Nay, John, I must deny you. My sweet Pen hath told me that she gave you something to serve as breakfast, having little faith in her father's hospitality, it seems. But you must trust me with your gratitude this time, for Pen

hath gone long since to the village to sit with someone there who needs her sympathy, nor will she return until you are many miles upon your journey."

Now, this was a great disappointment to me, for I had longed to see that smile of welcome come flitting across my sweet mistress' lips and to hear the mellow richness of her voice, and also there lurked in me a wish that Hal might behold this lady. But Mr. Booker, without further words, hurried me down the stairs and through the familiar garden, to a small set of stables where I had not been before, and where we found Hal waiting. He was examining restlessly the straps of a trio of well-groomed nags which stood there in charge of a foot-boy, while Tom, the hound, roamed leisurely about among their heels.

"John," said our host to me, "though I am sorry to send you forth so soon again, yet it is better that you test your skill at riding somewhat slowly at the start. You have barely time as it is to reach Petersfield before the night fall. Hal, too, as I see, is not a little impatient to be off. And so I will bid you God-speed—but a word with you still. Should you by any chance overtake the lady we have spoken of, I

advise you to ride on before her, neither joining yourselves to her following, nor speaking more with her than courtesy demands. Here is the letter of which I spoke, and now farewell until we meet again."

A few moments more, and Hal and I were bouncing up and down upon our little nags over the road that led to London town, while the serving man trotted comfortably behind; and as we passed along the outskirts of Havant, the door of a tiny cottage opened, while someone stood and watched us. And Hal, in imitation of myself, took off his cap and waved it, though he knew not to whom or why.

Excepting for fitful conversations between the serving man and myself concerning the state of the roads or condition of the horses, we rode almost in silence. Hal came behind, with his head down and the white tense look in his face that I had learned to know that night in Will Hanley's shallop, when we were chasing time towards Boston. Once or twice when I had addressed him he had seemed not even to hear me, and again had answered so at random and with such painful effort to arouse himself, that, while my heart ached to see him take madam's behaviour so, I let him alone and went

on ahead with only our guide for company. It was almost dark when we reached the little town of Petersfield, and so stiff and sore were Hal and I with the cold and the unaccustomed exercise, that an upright posture was the least uncomfortable we could assume, although my appetite at least was ripe for supper. Here we stayed the night, and the morning sun saw us once more in the saddle, but making rueful faces at the pain of it. At noon, when we stopped to bait our horses and ourselves at a little roadside tavern, we came to better roads, for the sun and brisk wind had done much to dry them, and we could make more speed accordingly. At this place we learned that a coach from Portsmouth had passed through but a few hours before, and that a lady who travelled therein to London had stopped to refresh herself at this very house. I saw Hal look up eagerly while the host imparted this intelligence, and a deep flush spread itself over his face.

"Can you tell us," he asked suddenly, "of any cross road by which we may the sooner come to London?"

But the man told us there was none, and Mr. Booker's man corroborated this statement.

"Then let us hasten," he said, and before I

could find my stirrup, he was already astride his nag and cantering away. At Leatherhead the night again overtook us, and although Hal was impatient of the delay, and wished to push on in the darkness, I would not sanction this even had the condition of our tired beasts permitted it. For the recollection of Mr. Booker's parting words rang in my ears, and perchance I was as anxious to avoid the meeting with madam as was my boy to compass it. And yet her name he never mentioned, but rode with his head down, and silently for the most part, though he made attempts at cheeriness whenever I approached him.

Not until the next morning was far advanced did we reach the little town of Newington. As we drew near the inn we saw that some commotion was in progress. The people were running about busily in the inn yard, and seemed to have no time to notice travellers of such poor estate as ourselves. Indeed, the hostlers refused to bring water for our thirsty horses, bidding us curtly to wait until their present business was over, or else to serve ourselves. Seeing no help for it, and nothing to be gained by bluster or argument, since they would not stand still for either, we dismounted, and led



our horses around to the other side of the building, where the stable yards were situated. And here what should we come upon but my lady's coach! Apparently it was undergoing some repairs, having been detained, as one of the men informed us, by the breaking of an axle bolt, and was but now about to start again upon the last stage of its long journey. Even as we entered the yard the post-boys leaped into their places, while the hostlers belonging to the little inn let go the heads of the leaders and turned them towards the place where we were standing in the way. The window of the carriage was covered, so that we could not see within, but as it passed us, the red again sprang into my dear boy's face, and he shrank back against his little nag until the beast reared and tried to bite his shoulder. I called to Mr. Booker's man to attend to my horse, and, dropping my bridle, ran around to the front of the inn, where the coach had drawn up in waiting. An instant later Hal silently joined me, and we stood there close together. Presently the landlord came bustling out, and threw open the door of the coach with a flourish, and then behind him we saw two others. Despite the fact that her travelling cloak (she had changed Betty's for

another) was drawn close about her face, which she had further concealed by means of a heavy veil, we had no difficulty in recognising my lady, and behind her, with head held high and his face looking paler and older than it had seemed to me before, was walking M. Duval. As he assisted her gracefully into her place and the clear tone of her voice, as she thanked him, reached us, I felt Hal start forward and put out my hand to restrain him. He fell back with a half stifled exclamation, and at sound of it I saw madam glance quickly in our direction. The stable wall hid us from her sight, however, and so she turned again to her companion, and, as the horses started on, I heard her say to him :

“ Your company hath been pleasant, Monsieur Claude, but I advise you to ride no nearer London. The country air is more wholesome, monsieur.”

“ She knows him, John,” Hal whispered to me, and “ So it seems, my lad,” I answered him.

And then from our watching place we saw the little black horse which had tumbled me three days before, led round to his waiting master, and a moment after M. Duval was in the saddle riding rapidly after the coach. We watched

him canter along beside it for a half mile down the straight road, and then he drew rein, and, bowing low with hat in hand as the coach swept past him, turned his Beauty's head sharply and disappeared from sight. And then Hal let go his grip upon my arm and cried:

"John, I cannot rest here. Let us follow after her, and finish this long journey."

And so when the sun had reached the zenith, and blazed down upon us with all the mild warmth of a winter's morning, we two rode into the town of London, wondering silently what there awaited us.

## CHAPTER XIV.

I THINK that the end of a great or unusual undertaking leaves ever behind it the feeling that for a time, at least, no more can justly be expected of us, or else if anything yet remains to be accomplished, we have no knowledge of how to go about it. And so when we pulled up in front of the little " Sun " tavern, in Fish Street, a sigh of relief escaped all three of us, and we stretched our muscles, and stamped and sauntered as though we had never again expected to throw leg over saddle. Even our good nags caught the infection of idleness, and fell to blinking lazily in the sun, with one hip relaxed and noses low. As yet we knew not whither we were bound. The letter which Mr. Booker had handed me still lay unread within my shirt, for the outer wrapping, which bore no inscription, we were not to break until we had arrived in London. So Hal and I went into the little tap-room of the inn and called for a mug of ale apiece, to liquidate the easier the pith of our instructions. It was not without some little

curiosity that I broke the outer seal of the letter, and held it up for Hal to read the address it bore. Nor did the lines he read decrease our capacity for wonder. For this is what was written on the packet, word for word, as here I put it down.

“ To His Grace, the Duke of Albemarle, in the City of London, These Presents: From His Grace's humble Servante, J. Booker; By the Hands of Master John Hadder and his young Warde called Hal, late of Provincetown, in His Majesty's Massachusettes Colonies.”

For a moment Hal and I sat in silence, looking into each other's faces, and then not knowing, in our surprise, what other course to follow, we smiled weakly, and emptied our pewter mugs, and afterwards Hal looked up and said:

“ We are finding our way into strange society, John!”

“ Yes,” said I, “ and varied. Yesterday it was a lady, who might from her airs and graces be the queen herself almost (though her behaviour had graced the cart-wheel better); yesterday this lady; to-day a sorcerer; to-morrow it seems the great General Monk, who has been

ill turned into ' His Grace ' ; what the next day may bring forth we cannot, of course, foresee, yet let us not be satisfied, say I, with less than King Charles himself ! ”

But my dear boy could not bear to hear Madam so lightly spoken of, even by myself, in jest.

“ This is no time for flippancy, John,” he cried, “ nor is there any reason why we should loiter here. Let us be off and deliver our letter, and see what is to come of it.”

So I arose and followed him (though I was loath to leave so comfortable a resting place, for I knew not what magnificence), since upon the rare occasions when Hal gave word of command I long had learned to yield obedience.

Telling Mr. Booker's man whither we now would be directed, we once more set out from our brief rest, riding as close together as possible through the narrow streets, and doing what we could to avoid the people who crowded into them, apparently quite regardless of our horses' hoofs or muzzles. Making slow progress, therefore, we came at last through a maze of streets, to a great dingy house, with a small court about it, and here our guide, after some parley with a couple of surly footmen,

gained a grudging admittance for us. No one, however, offered to assist us further, although a dozen serving men loitered about the court, and so we dismounted to ease our tired beasts, and stood in no very excellent humour, awaiting the return of a messenger who had sauntered leisurely to announce our arrival. For at least a half hour we were kept standing thus, the butt of much scarcely suppressed wit from the idle lackeys who seemed to have naught else with which to occupy themselves, save bickering over a game of crambo, from which they strove to gain amusement. At this treatment, which was so different from anything we had looked for, it was all my cooler head could do to prevent Hal from an outbreak of anger, and seeing the disturbance brewing, the men took to winking the more, and passed around slighting remarks concerning the old-fashioned cut of our clothes, and the mildness of our good little nags. Mr. Booker's man, however, bore this reception with a degree of patience which was a lesson to me, eyeing the insolent fellows with a kind of steadiness and forbearance which he had caught from his master, doubtless, and which I vainly tried to imitate. But just as I saw Hal's fingers tighten ominously around the riding stick

he was carrying, to my relief the man who had admitted us came out of the house and again crossed the court to the place where we were standing. And as he did so the game of crambo stopped, and all eyes were turned to watch what fate awaited us, while Hal dropped his bridle and stood erect to learn His Grace's pleasure.

"You are to follow me around to the other side of the court," the man said. "No, lead your little nags," he added, impudently, as we started on without them. "Lead them along. You may need them when you go out the left gate."

"Stop!" exclaimed Hal angrily. "Are we to understand that His Grace refuses to receive the letter we have for him?"

"Understand anything you please, young sir," the man answered sulkily. "My orders are to lead you through the court. If you choose not to follow, why that's your own affair."

Wishing to avoid anything that was like to create ill will against us, I begged Hal to follow quietly (though much I had preferred to stop and twist this fellow's neck), and presently we found ourselves facing the opposite windows of



the great house, our backs against the wall of the courtyard, and the footmen who had followed our progress lined up to right of us and gazing in silent insolence at our discomfort. At first so great a feeling of angry rebellion welled up within me at being thus made an object for their ridicule (for it seemed as if we had been placed there for no other purpose), that I had nearly rushed headlong upon them, to show that colonial muscles were of better stuff, mayhap, than were colonial fashions, when, happening to glance upward towards the windows of the house, the reason of our being so exposed burst suddenly upon me. Leaning from one of the windows which stood highest above the ground, and gazing intently down upon us, was a woman of somewhat extraordinary appearance. As I saw her face, it was red and puffy, and swathed with her neck and shoulders as well in a yellow scarf of lace, the ends of which flapped constantly in the wind like a couple of ghostly arms, while from beneath the edge of it escaped untidy wisps of colorless hair. Excepting as the scant lace fell over them, her arms were bare, as though she had interrupted her toilette to look upon ourselves. Seeing the direction of my gaze (for so

extraordinary an apparition did she make that I had made no effort to withdraw it), Hal glanced upward, too, and with the ready courtesy that never but that once on board the "Queen" had I seen desert him, pulled off his cap and bowed, and I saw him blush in doing it. I hastened to follow his example in good manners, if not in modesty, and when I looked up again the lady had disappeared. But a moment after she again thrust out her head and screamed in tones that startled even me, while it set all the serving men atremble:

"Why didn't you say it was a gentleman, you dog? Bring them up! I'll have you taught manners yet! Bring them up!"

The change of bearing towards us was instantaneous. The men who had been most insolent, now rushed forward to relieve us of our horses, while three or four others hastened to show us the way within, mingling their offers of service with deprecating excuses for their late behaviour. Surrounded by these scurvy time-servers, Hal and I were ushered into a great gloomy hall. So dark was it that before I reached the stair, I had stumbled half a dozen times over the innumerable objects with which it was cluttered, and had fallen more than once

prone among them, had not a lackey held my arm. Once I stepped upon a dog, and his howls of pain and surprise followed me like the imprecations of the Evil One. Hal, who went before, fared no better, and I heard his exclamations growing more forcible in their nature, until, when something got between his legs, and sent him sprawling along the stairs, they assumed almost the magnitude of profanity. But here a light coming dimly from above aided us greatly, and, our eyes growing more accustomed to the darkness, we were able to proceed with greater ease, and presently were admitted into a large, gaudily furnished room, whose windows opened onto the court below. And there, too, reigned the same state of dire confusion. Chairs were bunched together anywhere with no attempt at the regularity I love in furniture; books and papers were scattered about on floor and bench and table, as if some business had been recently transacted there; the candlesticks held ends of candles which had sputtered themselves to destruction, and seemed ashamed of the mess they had made in doing it, and in the chimney still reposed the ashes of last night's fire. In this untidy apartment, through which the gilt and coloring of the rich furnishings

gleamed in strange contrast to the care bestowed upon them, Hal and I were left together, while our safe arrival through the perils of the way was announced within. And here, as we waited, a surprising thing occurred. For suddenly the door through which we just had entered was pushed open a few inches, and a head peeped cautiously in. Then from the snivelling lips which belonged upon that face came an exclamation of astonishment and dismay, for at sight of the sweet target I had picked up a heavy book and aimed with all my strength and skill, and immediately the place once more was vacant, while outside I heard the sound of footsteps retreating rapidly.

"Who was it, John?" cried Hal, for he had stood gazing into the court below, and his back was toward the door.

"Only one of our oldest friends, my boy," I answered with what degree of sarcasm belonged to me, "by name Will Hanley, and the devil catch him if I am not successful! For now he can defend himself, and the first chance I have will teach him my opinion of his character."

But before Hal could agree with me the door again was opened, and the lackey who had brought us thither announced that Her Grace

was ready to receive us. From a feeling of my own insignificance, and a kind of shyness that caused my heart to dance in very shame of it, I modestly stood aside as did become me, motioning Hal to go before. But he, too, seemed possessed of a strange reluctance and growled:

“Don’t be a fool, John, go along,” and perchance I had obeyed him had not the memory of those many lessons in courtesy which he had given me come suddenly to my mind. So I would not usurp the place that rightly belonged to him, and as we wavered thus, the voice which had wrought such change among the serving men below, screamed harshly to ourselves:

“Come in, come in and shut the door, or else shut the door and stay out if you like it so! You are slow enough in all conscience—shut the door, I say!”

Then Hal with a disdainful look in my direction pushed quickly past me, while I, with my heart still thumping, followed at his heels, and the lackey closed the offending door behind us.

Her Grace of Albemarle was sitting on a low chair, partially facing the door, while a woman behind her was engaged in arranging an elaborate headdress to cover her mutinous wisps of hair. The yellow lace had fallen to her shoul-

ders, but partly hiding, with its somewhat soiled and tumbled folds, the plump and ruddy exposure. A short petticoat of blue silken stuff left visible a goodly show of ankle, which made up in sturdiness what it lacked in beauty; her feet were encased in shoes that looked painfully tight, and, indeed, as she sat there she had a trick of keeping them almost constantly in motion, so that had a screen been placed before her, leaving only her high red heels visible, an observer must have decided that Her Grace was performing a quiet kind of jig behind it. In one hand she held a silver mirror, with aid of which she watched the progress of her toilette, which she strove to accelerate by giving vent to lively imprecations against her woman. Everywhere about the room were scattered in the most disorderly profusion rich and beautiful articles of dress—jewels, laces, broken fans, and things I knew not the meaning of, while upon a table, amid other débris, there still remained the fragments of a substantial breakfast. All this I took in at a glance (for it hath ever been a rule of mine to see and take mental note of those things my eyes may rest upon), while Hal stood motionless, scarce venturing to lift his eyes from the floor, lest he should blush at

this strange spectacle. Meanwhile Her Grace, taking no notice whatever of my humble self, sat looking silently at Hal, and then a broad smile crept over her face, making it almost pleasing in its breadth of ruddiness.

"Young gentleman," she said in kindlier tones than I had thought her harsh voice capable of, "yours is the first sign of modesty I have seen in many a year, so I pray you think it not strange that I should have failed to count upon it. It is a virtue somewhat out of fashion, but perhaps is all the better on that account. I am informed that you come from our friend of Hadley, Master Booker. Pray, what hath called him to Havant, and what is your business with me?"

"Our business is with my Lord Duke," Hal answered in a low voice. "We have a letter for him."

"Eh," cried Her Grace; "speak louder, if you please, young sir, or else come closer to me, one or t'other! I do not bite!"

She motioned to a stool which stood beside her, and Hal seated himself reluctantly upon it, while for support and sympathy I placed myself beside him.

"And so you have a letter for my Lord?" the

duchess began, having heard well enough, as it seemed. "Deliver it to me, if you please, young gentleman. My Lord Duke's letters are safest with his wife."

"Your Grace," I cried, for Hal looked up at me in doubt as to what answer he should give, and I could hold my tongue no longer, "this letter is addressed to the Duke of Albemarle, and Mr. Booker hath confided it to my care. How, then, can I give it honestly into other hands?"

The lady raised her eyes to my face for the first time, and puckered her lips slightly like one about to whistle.

"My soul!" she exclaimed. "What a pair it is! Modesty and honesty all in one day. What next? And yet, which is the strangest part, I like you none the worse. Still the letter must be delivered. There is but one chance of my Lord's receiving it, and that is through me. So let us have no further argument!"

I was for demurring still, but Hal looked up at me and said:

"Her Grace is quite right, John. Surely the letter will be safe with her since she assures us of it, and may the quicker reach my Lord. I am sure the lady means us only well."



“Take care how you count your chickens before the hatch!” Her Grace replied, though I saw she was not ill pleased with Hal’s artless flattery. Somewhat reluctantly I took the packet from my breast and put it into her hands, and could not help some slight misgiving as I watched the avidity with which she broke the seal. The letter, as I saw from a glimpse I caught of it, consisted of but some half dozen lines of fine writing, but short as it was, Her Grace spent considerable time in spelling it over, and finally she handed the paper to Hal, bidding him read it out. So he took it in his hand and read aloud, as if he did something against his conscience:

“Will His Grace, the Duke of Albemarle, in token of that friendship which he so often hath expressed for me, give his kind hospitality to these two men who are my friends, letting them see the life of Whitehall and be seen therein for a space, to the advantage of their education. If His Grace will compass this for a short time, he will put under the deepest obligation to him His Grace’s most humble servant,

“J. BOOKER,

“Now at Havant.”

“ Mr. Booker had done well to apply to me in the first place, for such a matter,” said the lady when Hal had finished. “ And so will my Lord say when he sees the letter. But now since he hath not confided in us, tell me, young gentleman, who and what you are ? ”

Again Hal glanced at me with that pitiful, puzzled look in his eyes which came there always when he was questioned thus about himself, and besides, although in muscle or in ordinary things of mind where he had an equal chance, no man could get the better of him, with a woman before him he ever was willing to defer to my larger experience. So I began to explain for him that we had just arrived from the Colonies, and hoped to see what life at court was like, and yet before my words were fairly started Her Grace interrupted me impatiently.

“ Man,” she exclaimed, “ when I want your tongue, I have one of my own with which to ask for it! Until then keep it in subjection, and let this boy speak for himself ! ”

She looked at Hal with greater patience than I had given her credit for possessing, and waited not unkindly for his answer. And finally he said simply, and with a quiet smile that touched me to the heart :

"Madam, John Hadder here is my foster father, and I am but a castaway."

"Eh," cried Her Grace; "then you do not know your name? Is it, perchance, Mr. Booker's business to find out for you?"

"He has taken a very kindly interest, your Grace," Hal answered in the same quiet way, "and yet I think it matters little what name a man may bear."

And I knew that he was thinking of my lady now and the way in which she had deserted him, so my heart ached to see how his ambition was affected, though this was the first time he had spoken so.

For a moment after Her Grace sat silently looking at my boy out of the corners of her little eyes, and then she stretched out her hand to him and said:

"I hope we may entertain an angel unawares in yourself, Master Hal, since so I have heard your friend here name you; at any rate, we shall give you shelter, and do what we can towards placing you as our good friend Booker hath desired."

"Your Grace is very kind," Hal answered, while I, not venturing to speak my thanks, bowed low before her.

"So I am," returned the lady coolly. "Meanwhile, have you no other duds to your backs than these rather strange ones that cover them? An appearance thus at Whitehall would cause a panic!"

"We have none beside," Hal answered. "But are clothes so great a matter?"

Now this seemed to tickle Her Grace's humour greatly, for she burst suddenly into a fit of chuckling laughter, which caused the tears to run chasing over her fat cheeks until I feared some harm would come to her, and begged her woman to look after her.

"Well, well," she gasped, when once more her speech came back to her, "a pretty pair it is for Whitehall, to be sure! Pray you, gentlemen, are all His Majesty's colonial subjects so simple?"

"Eh, eh, what is all this about, Anne? What hath made you so merry?" said a heavy voice behind us, and glancing around I saw standing by the door an awkwardly proportioned man, with a bluff brown face that spoke of wind and weather and battles with the sea, and he was regarding us with undisguised curiosity. The lady also glanced over her shoulder, and then, mopping the tears from her chin with the end

of the yellow lace, she turned to me and gasped:

“ Now, my honest one, you may deliver your letter, after all, into the hands of the Duke of Albermarle!”

## CHAPTER XV.

IN this manner were Hal and I installed as members of the Duke's household, and then began a life that greatly irked us. My Lord Duke, after the presentation of our letter, had expressed his great willingness to serve our friend and his, in a manner so pleasurable to his household, as he was gracious enough to term it; he had then commended us to the good graces of his lady, and having done this much had seemingly forgotten our existence. When by chance we met him, either in his own house or abroad, as indeed happened but rarely, he accorded us a nod of vague recognition, and passed on without inquiry. But knowing that he was deeply engrossed in affairs of national import, we thought little of this, and were grateful for his passive patronage. With my Lady Duchess, however, affairs bore a different complexion. She had quickly conceived a great liking for Hal, and even, in a lesser degree, for my humble self, saying often that two men so honest were a new experience to her, and that

she would have us near her always, that she might learn the trick of it. One of the first things she did was to have a tailor come to measure us, and with such brave clothes did he provide us (two suits apiece—no less), that for a space I was almost ashamed to appear abroad, until I found that no one marked me. But Hal, whose things were much more rich and gay than were my own, as became—so I thought in secret—his coming rank, seemed to take to them as naturally as a duck to water, and looked so handsome in his curled periwig that I only wished sweet Mistress Penelope could have seen him, and wondered what my Betty would have said. Finding that he was lacking in some of the accomplishments which a life at court necessitates, Her Grace had him taught by both dancing and fencing masters, although already he had no little skill in the noble art of self-defence. So apt a pupil was he, and so quickly did he recover from his first shyness and fear of herself—taking little artless liberties of speech, and once or twice even innocently rebuking her for the intolerance of her tongue and temper—that my Lady Duchess scarcely could get enough of him, and before we had been a fortnight of her household, appointed him one of her gentleman

ushers for the period of our stay. Nor would she stir abroad thereafter unless Hal and myself attended her, for my dear boy, although I had begged him not to do so, had plainly told Her Grace that we were not to be separated, and that wherever he attended her, there must John Hadder also attend himself.

“ With so gallant a young spark as you, Master Hal, and so sturdy and trusty a sea dog as our friend John,” Her Grace had been pleased to answer, “ I might advance in safety against the Dutch themselves almost, and sure I need no other following to protect me when I stir abroad. Had my lord been blessed with such men in his ships of late, it had been better for his name.”

And so we became a sort of body-guard for her, following her wherever it was her pleasure to go, and doing what we were able to prove our gratitude for her kindness.

Of Will Hanley (happily for himself) we saw but little, and that at no close quarters, nor did we know his business in the house (since we could say nothing of his story without telling more of our own than it was our wish to do), save that he occupied a humble position there, which had been obtained for him through the



kindly offices of the good minister, Mr. Baxter, who had so tried to aid and befriend him on board the "Queen," having, as even more astute men might have done, mistaken Will's whining for true piety. He took good care to keep well out of our way, although I sometimes caught his eye upon us, and from this I knew that no godly spirit of forgiveness had as yet begun to cleanse his traitor's heart.

Not only with Her Grace had Hal made good friendship, but with the whole household did he ingratiate himself, and as well as I was able I followed the example which he set me. Nor, knowing how their lives were spent in cringing, did we harbour ill will towards the lackeys who had at first insulted us, and for this they strove to show their gratitude. Mr. Booker's man, who had ridden with us from Havant, the following day had started upon his return thither, taking with him for his master a letter from Hal, in which was set down an account of our journey, and of the kindness of my Lady Duchess towards us.

Meanwhile we awaited, with what patience we could summon, some further word from him, and waited long and wearily. For, notwithstanding the kindness we received, the life was

strange to us, and we missed our freedom sorely. It seemed to us that in that little space so densely crowded, there remained no air for our sea-bred lungs to breathe, while the unhealthy state of mind and body, too, that we beheld about us filled Hal's soul with loathing for such littleness, and my own with scorn that men could be thus satisfied. At Whitehall, whither we went in Her Grace's train, we were received with slight stir, as indeed we noted was Her Grace herself. The first time I remember well how she went thither dressed in her fine silks and laces, soiled and crumpled as they always were, and limping painfully in her high-heeled shoes. Hal and I saw with anger (for she was our kind patroness then) how, as she passed them, more than one of the ladies and courtiers smiled broadly at the spectacle she made, not even taking pains to hide their amusement behind her back, though she seemed to be unconscious of it, too. Indeed, she bore herself as proudly and with as much important self-possession as the greatest lady of them all, and this it did me good to see, for I had heard that they looked down upon her for her humble birth, and now the more that my Lord was somewhat out of favor with the court on account of

his late misfortune on the seas. As for my boy, he seemed as much at home among all these strange surroundings as though the court had been no more than the cuddy of our little vessel, so that every time I saw him thus, I marvelled the more, trying in private to learn the trick of his unconcern, and never being able. And yet, though his manner was as courtly as any of those whose lives were spent in learning it in this first school in England, there was about him, too, an air of independence, an absence of all thought of truckling to mere rank and human greatness, which did not fail to draw all eyes upon him, and at first even His Majesty looked at him with favor. I say at first, for, to his shame it must be said, the King had eyes for no other than my Lady Castlemaine, and when he observed the interest with which she watched the honest freshness of Hal's young face, His Majesty grew quickly indifferent to his presence, and finally came scarcely to take note of it at all. This I had never discovered for myself (it having never entered my head to dream that a king could come to be jealous of my Hal) had it not been for a strange and lively gentleman whom I often met at court, as well as at my Lord Duke's house and at various places

whither my wanderings about the town did lead me. His name, I learned, was Mr. Samuel Pepys, and a man so fond of gossip I never before had come across. Indeed he plied me with so many questions that often I went out of my way to avoid him, fearing that I should be unsuccessful in the parry. And yet was his conversation so cheery and entertaining to me that afterwards I always regretted having acted so. I think he was at first attracted to me by hearing that I had just come from the colonies, and from learning the nature of my business there, and I gave him all the information I was able to part with concerning the fish, and the way in which the business was carried on with us, and in this he showed much interest, asking me, in return, to dine with him at the "Devil," in the Fleet Street, where the ale and mallows oysters were to his liking. This I did, having first told Hal of my project (for it was against our practice to separate, except upon rare occasions), and it was at this time that my entertainer warned me to take care how I put Hal under the nose of my Lady Castlemaine, if we looked to enjoy the King's favour. And then he went on to relate such tales of the court, and even of our own Duchess of Albemarle, that my blood

boiled within me to hear him, and, finally, to save myself from some great offence, I went away and left him.

But afterwards I took especial pains to note the reception which Hal was given each time we attended Her Grace to Whitehall, and upon this close examination I found a grain of truth in the imaginings of my informant. For the beautiful countess, no matter how much she might otherwise be occupied, had always a smile and a nod for Hal, which he returned with gravity, while His Majesty, if he chanced to be near, as was quite certain to be the case, acknowledged Hal's obeisance with a look that nearly resembled a scowl. And yet sometimes I thought it was not so much the evident admiration of my Lady Castlemaine which gave His Majesty offence, as perhaps the honest light of purity that blazed from Hal's young eyes, to challenge the lie in which the court lay steeped. For when the lady, as had chanced on one or two occasions, was absent from the King's side, His Majesty had accorded Hal some interest, asking him questions concerning the New England settlements, and the manner of our life therein, and even going so far as to praise the simplicity and sturdiness of our race, comparing

it to that more effeminate condition of things with which he was familiar. And even myself he called once or twice before him, questioning me graciously about the fisheries, and my interest therein—for Mr. Pepys had described my business to him—and all the time I stood quaking in fear lest he should ask the meaning of my presence at his court. For Mr. Booker had cautioned us that we say nothing of this until he gave us leave, for fear lest by too great precipitation we should do some damage to our cause, and so we were to live and patiently wait our time for speaking. Perchance it was this very fear of mine that finally put it into His Majesty's head to ask the question, just as I was hoping to escape. We had gone to Whitehall somewhat early, Hal and I, and for the first time were not in Her Grace's company, having been given our liberty for the day, with instructions to discover for her what things were forward. And for this we had come, though much preferring to enjoy our vacation in another manner. In some way we had separated, Hal going with some of the gayer sparks who sought amusement, and I wandering by myself, here and there, to see what news I might gather for her Grace. And soon I met the

King, who that morning deigned to notice my humble presence.

“ It seems, Master Hadder,” said His Majesty, “ that you are somewhat out of your element at present. Our court is a good fishing ground, no doubt, though the bait is different and the catch somewhat less certain. How comes it that you have changed your ship for softer quarters ? ”

And then, as often happens to me when I need them most, my wits deserted me completely, and I stammered out the first thing that came into my head, which was the worst that could have escaped me.

“ Sire,” I said, “ a lady brought us ! ”

For a moment His Majesty looked at me with eyebrows raised and lips puckered, and then, without changing the expression of his face, he turned slowly and looked at my Lady Castlemaine, and then, in turn, to each of his gentlemen, of whom one was the Duke of Richmond, but that day reappearing at court. Then he burst into a short laugh, in which the others were not slow to join, while my face burned with angry mortification over my stupidity.

“ And so, my grave Puritan,” cried the King,

“ your simple soul responds as well as more complicated ones it seems. A lady hath led you this long dance, eh? Truly she must be a marvel to have such power. Describe her, Master Hadder, describe her. Hath she greater charm, for instance, than this fair lady boasts?”

My Lady Castlemaine, upon whose arm the King had rested his hand, laughed somewhat constrainedly, though at the same time she cried gaily:

“ Be not afraid of my jealousy, sir; pray let us have a full and honest description.”

Now I scarcely know what it was that took possession of me, but there grew up suddenly in my mind a picture of Hal's face, pale and tired, as so often I saw it now when he thought no one observed him. And with this came a fierce desire for revenge upon her who had wrought such change in my dear boy's happy nature, and this thought, no doubt, it was that displaced my embarrassment, for I cried:

“ As beautiful perchance she may be, sire, but for your Majesty's sake I trust this lady's heart is not so full of treachery!”

Now, although I know that the King started, and let an exclamation of surprise escape him,



and that the Countess of Castlemaine bestowed upon me a stare of haughty interrogation before she turned with a radiant smile of assurance to her royal companion, yet the thing I saw and felt most clearly was the black scowl and the snarl, like that of a vicious dog as he shows his teeth, which His Grace of Richmond flung at me. Even the King himself noticed it, while the Duke, in reply to the look of inquiry directed towards him, bowed low, as I thought to cover his face, and said :

“Sire, a man who speaks thus of a lady deserves no favour from your Majesty!”

“Perchance you are right,” the King said coolly, “and yet we are somewhat interested in spite of your opinion. What is this lady’s name, Master Seaman?”

This time there was no need for hesitancy.

“Sire,” I replied, “I never knew it.”

“Eh? Gentlemen, this grows interesting! And her station? Was she high or lowly? Puritan or Papist? A lady of our dominions at home or abroad?”

“I can give but one answer,” I replied honestly, “and that is that I do not know.”

“Well, well, we must hear more of this strange tale some time, though now I see less

interesting matters are coming to interrupt us. But remember, Master Hadder, to finish your meagre description, and to be more liberal with your information."

To my great relief our conversation was broken by the opportune appearance of my Lord Duke of Albemarle, who with several other gentlemen came, with papers in their hands and an air of business in their faces, to have speech with His Majesty; and so being free to take myself off, I was not slow to take advantage of the opportunity. But I was to find that the affair was not quite finished, for before I had gone many steps I was joined by no less a personage than His Grace of Richmond, who laid a heavy hand upon my shoulder.

"You low thief of a fisherman!" he said to me slowly, like one whose words are spoke with meaning, "if you value the safety of yourself, or more particularly that of your young companion, I advise you say no more upon this subject. And should the King question you again, you will do well to devise a tale that does not fit a certain lady!"

And before I could say a word in justification of myself, or ask a question as to his right to dictate, or what he knew about us, he had as

quickly left me, and once more rejoined the group about the King, while for a moment I stood staring after him, too astonished over this sudden interference on the part of a stranger to realize my position. I was brought to myself again by a nod of recognition which my friend Mr. Pepys threw at me from behind my lord's back, and when he saw that he had succeeded in catching my eye he beckoned me to wait for him beside the tennis-court. Not knowing what else to do, I sauntered on, therefore, my head full of this strange occurrence. In the court I found Hal at play with young Mr. Harry Jermyn, and so I stayed and watched them until my new friend arrived. He ran up to me with a great air of importance.

"Master Hadder," he cried, "I have two places for the play at the Duke's house to-day. Will you come and see the prettiest woman who had danced there since Nelly Gwyn deserted us?"

So for want of excuse (though I knew not whither I was bound, for thus far no play-house had seen me, because of my early education and my Betty's teachings) I consented to go with him. We dined together hastily off a lamprey pie and muscadine (a drink which tickled my

palate poorly) at the "Bear," in Drury Lane, going early therefrom to the Duke's house, and this was the last as it was the first time that ever I attended there. For when the play began the only thing that pleased me was the knowledge that Hal was absent. So strange a place I never had seen before, nor perchance one so full of wit (though of a coarse kind, as I viewed it), and gaiety, and a kind of ribald life and fellowship that seemed to hold the meaning of it all. Our places were in the middle section of the house, in a kind of gallery, and from this point we had a good view of the stage, and of the pit as well, wherein were scores of women whose faces were covered with black masks, in shame of it. My entertainer, however, seemed vastly pleased to find himself of this company, and was eager to show and explain everything for my understanding, buying oranges from a bold girl whom he addressed familiarly, and going into ecstasies of delight over a woman who came and danced for us upon the stage and sang some merry songs, whereat the people laughed exceedingly, though I could see no reason for it in my shame for her.

" 'Tis little Miss Davis, Master John," cried my friend. " Ah, but you should see Nelly!

No one can dance like Nelly! Now, who may that be, Master John?—your eyes are better than mine.”

A little stir had run through the place, for the moment drawing his attention from the stage. So I turned and looked as he bade me, and behold, there was Hal, and with him none other than he with whom my thoughts had lately been so full, namely, my Lord Duke of Richmond! Mr. Jermyn also was of the company, as well as one or two others whom I knew by name or sight, and they took their places where I had good view of them, in one of the boxes near the stage. And thereafter I turned my attention thither, finding much more to interest me in the face of my dear boy than in all the mummery that went on about me. He sat with his head down after the first few minutes, and a flush of annoyance upon his face, while the Duke placed himself a little behind him, and, as I was not slow to realise, was more intent upon watching Hal than he was upon the mocking gaiety of Miss Davis. Indeed, as he sat there his eyes scarcely for a moment left Hal's face, and his brows were drawn together in a scowl which relaxed only when one of his company addressed him. Mr. Jermyn and the others

amused themselves in their own way, taking little notice of the silence of their companions, but much of Miss Davis, and of the orange girls in the pit, who gave back smiles for compliments, and flung saucy answers to their favours. Mr. Pepys meanwhile took his first opportunity to question me, as I had feared he had it in his mind to do.

“His Grace of Richmond seems one of your friends,” said he. “Did he not detain you at Whitehall this morning? I came too late to hear the purport of the affair, but it seemed that the King was much diverted over something that you had related, while His Grace was interested in a way less pleasant.”

“He stopped me to say that Hal would come here in his company,” I answered shortly, for I thought a little lie was justifiable where so great impertinence flourished unrebuked.

“’Tis strange how ill their Graces are thriving with the court of late,” Mr. Pepys proceeded, seeming not to note the stiffness of my reply. “Here is my Lord of Albemarle, blamed for his ill luck with the Dutch; Buckingham in disgrace; Richmond hated for his intended marriage——”

“Marriage?” I interrupted, so loudly that

the people near turned about to gaze at me.

"Whom is His Grace to marry, sir?"

Mr. Pepys laughed, and then cocked his head to one side, as Miss Davis did every now and again in the course of her song, and looked drolly at me.

"No, no, Master Seaman!" he said. "It is a secret one does not tell at random, and a thing as yet uncertain. But my advice to you, sir," and here he leaned over and whispered in my ear, "whomever you ask about it, be sure that it is not Old Rowley!"

Now it seemed so absurd that I should ever dream of approaching the King on such a subject, that I joined Mr. Pepys in his laugh, and Hal, as my luck would have it, happening to glance upward, caught me in this great state of merriment, and the look he gave me showed that he was disappointed in John Hadder. And such when we came once more together I found to be the case, for he said to me, gravely:

"Am I so very stupid, John, that I can find so little pleasure in what is another man's choice amusement?"

"It is that we are both dull and wise, my boy," I answered him; "and so are we like other men, though our lives are nearer nature.

But there was greater wisdom than amusement in my laugh to-day."

So I related to him all that had befallen me at Whitehall, and told how His Majesty had tried to pump me, and what thing had come of it; and when I had finished he gave me account of how the Duke had come to him in the tennis-court, and, with a very friendly air, had begged his company for that afternoon at the Duke's house, and on their way thither he had asked him bluntly whether he knew one Mr. Booker of Havant, and if so, what was his interest in our affairs. This question, Hal had told him as bluntly that he was not at liberty to answer, whereupon His Grace had not again addressed him the whole time they were in company, and had it not been for the high spirits of young Mr. Harry Jermyn, they had been a sulky party indeed. But Hal said that this young gentleman had whispered to him that His Grace of Richmond being in love (and here he had winked portentously), and that the course of it being anything but smooth in his case, all men were bound to humour him, excepting, indeed, His Majesty the King, who also was in love. And then this merry gentleman had twisted his mouth and laughed. So taking



this explanation for something, we endeavoured to excuse His Grace for his strange conduct towards us, though why he should make a butt of us I could not understand.

## CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN we reached my Lord Duke's house that night, Mr. Mount, Her Grace's factotum, met us with a piece of news that further mystified us.

"Your countryman, Hanley, has taken himself off," he said to us, "and with all deference to Mr. Baxter, who recommended him to me, I will say that I am glad to be rid of the good-for-nothing. Since your arrival the fellow hath done little besides follow you about whenever he had chance to shirk his work, though before that he was well enough. Hath he any grudge against you, sirs? I would look out for a man who can scowl so!"

We told him that Hanley had no just cause to wish us harm, and begged him to tell us when he had left the house, and how, and this information he gave us willingly. It seemed that just after our departure that morning for Whitehall, a strange man had come in and asked for Will. Being found, Hanley had been en-

gaged in conversation with this stranger for an hour or more, and the man had then departed, leaving our friend downcast and thoughtful, and this passing attitude of mind I put down as his only credit mark when I learned the meaning afterwards. Shortly after the dinner hour, then, Will had left the house, telling a fellow servant that he should not return. This was all that Mr. Mount could tell us, and although we were glad to be rid of the sight of Will's sneaking face, yet I believe his absence gave us the more uneasiness.

"Be sure he is up to some new deviltry, John!" Hal said to me, when we had thought it over in silence, and for the time we were obliged to let it go at that.

The next morning the Duchess sent for us early, and we went in great haste to her apartment, where she continued to receive us, before we had fairly finished breakfast. Her Grace we found still in bed, with a screen set up before her and an odour of chocolate in the room. To our great joy we learned that she had just received—or rather there had come for my lord, and Her Grace appropriated—a letter from our long silent friend and patron, Mr. Booker, and this she flung forcibly over the screen for Hal

to read. The wording was given with his usual brevity, and was to inform the Duke that he should give himself the pleasure of waiting upon him in a few days. This news gave us the greatest delight, for we knew not from hour to hour what was expected of us, but had lived continually in the hope of hearing something which would give guidance to our actions, since we had voluntarily delivered our cause into another's hand. Three months we had been in London, and all that time no trace of my lady had appeared; and silently I had watched my boy's young face grow older, and white and thin, while his eyes took on a trick of wandering wistfully from face to face, although his tongue was sealed. With Her Grace in particular was his position a difficult one. She plied him continually with questions as to his early life, his possible parentage, and our relations with Mr. Booker. And now, to add to this the way in which I had blundered with the King, our affairs indeed seemed to be nearing a crisis. We could scarcely hope to cover up much longer the story of Hal's long past misfortune, nor of my lady's discovery of him, and all that had led us to come to London, although up to this time, in deference to our patron's wish,

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none of the main facts had escaped us. And so were we much relieved to learn that he who had sealed our lips was perchance on the way to open them, and that now our long time of suspense was growing near the close. In his first flush of pleasure and relief Hal let a little laugh escape him and exclaimed gaily:

“This is the best thing we have heard in London, John!”

“Gad,” cried my Lady Duchess from behind her screen, “you are gallant, young sir! Are you so very anxious to leave me, then?”

“Your Grace will pardon me,” said Hal, “if I answer truthfully that I shall be glad. For though never has any one been kinder to me than your Grace, still I was not made with a heart to like this life, and I cannot but be anxious to have done with it.”

“Go along with you then!” screamed the lady, and a missile in the shape of a cake from her breakfast board came flying over the screen. “Were it not for my Lord, you should both be turned into the street, with no more than the pretty clothes you came in on your backs. A precious pair, indeed, and a good friend of ours this Booker, to send you here. Go along, I say,

go!—and,” she added as we turned to obey her, “see that you are more ready for your duty when I send for you.”

So we went out, smiling quietly at one another, for while Her Grace used her tongue so freely, we felt that she meant little by it, and that she truly wished us not to leave her service, and I thought it was this very independence in Hal's attitude towards her that made her like him so. But we had scarcely reached the stair when we were again summoned into her presence, and as we entered for the second time she received us with her cracked laugh, and with no apparent intention of renewing the scene but just enacted.

“Truly, my wit is deserting me,” she began, “for I had forgot the very thing, to ask about which I sent for you. Yesterday you were at Whitehall, and my Lord saw you there when he went to do his business with His Majesty. My Lord is a good soldier and a better seaman, but he hath little eye or tongue for gossip. Neither, I fear, hath this young gentleman. But you, Master John, can tell me, no doubt, what it was that passed between His Grace of Richmond and the King?”

Now I neither relished the imputation nor

the question, but I could do no less than give some answer, so I said :

“ I saw nothing but scowls, your Grace ! ”

“ Ah,” cried the lady, “ the rumour is true, then, no doubt. And how looked the Duke under this treatment ? ”

“ Faith, like a dog about to hang, when His Majesty glanced his way, and like a dog about to bite when he glanced towards His Majesty.”

“ Yes, yes, no doubt your description is clever, Master John,” the Duchess was good enough to say ; but she spoiled the compliment immediately by adding : “ Clever, no doubt, but it hath a sameness. What I want is news of his face and of his air and bearing. Was he drunk or sober—handsome or bloated, eh ? ”

Now, for some reason, though as a usual thing I see things better, it had never occurred to me to think of this man in so personal a manner. But now, as Her Grace questioned me, his face came vividly before me, and something made me glance up at Hal. He stood with his eyes upon the floor, and his brows drawn together in a way which was unusual to him, and, as I looked, it came suddenly into my mind that His Grace of Richmond had a handsome face, though its beauty was spoiled by the

way he had of scowling. Again I glanced at Hal, and involuntarily a little exclamation of something like surprise or dismay escaped me. The Duchess craned her neck around the corner of her screen, and called out sharply to know why I did not answer, while Hal looked up in astonishment to meet my staring eyes.

"Your Grace," I stammered, "the Duke's face is not so—so fine as Hal's, but——"

"Plague take the man!" exclaimed the lady, while Hal looked at me in increasing surprise and vexation. "Do you never get your Hal, Hal, Hal out of your head? Who spoke of Hal, I should like to know? You may go, both of you. Even my Lord can tell me more."

So we went out the second time, leaving Her Grace to mutter over my stupidity, and very crestfallen I felt because of it.

"Whatever possessed you to say so silly a thing, John?" Hal said to me when we had gained the passage. "I know that you look at me always with partial eyes, but to give so strange an answer to Her Grace's question! It goes beyond my comprehension!"

But I had no explanation ready, for my brain was in a whirl with the thought that had come into it, and Hal, getting no reply to his ques-



tion, and seeing that something troubled me, was content to wait my pleasure, knowing that when I had thought it out I would confide in him.

In silence we made our way down into the court below, and there we found a most joyful surprise awaiting us. For who should just have ridden in, following so closely upon his message, but Mr. Booker himself, and never, I believe, had I been so glad to see a friend. He greeted us with his usual smile of quiet power, that seemed to carry ease for my new problem in its birth, and then, with a light of amusement in his eyes which told in what small esteem he held such outward things, he shook us each by the hand, and complimented us upon the change in our appearance. And then I saw him look wistfully into Hal's listless eyes, which had lighted with the first gladness of arrival, and then grown sad again like a swift flash of morning sunshine that is hid in its first glow with flying clouds.

The reception accorded to our patron, although so indolent a place was it that the household was yet barely astir, was most cordial, each man doing his utmost to serve and welcome him. A couple of his own grooms had

ridden with him, and all three had been since sunrise in the saddle, yet they had a look far fresher than my lord's men boasted, and a better appetite for breakfast. Mr. Booker begged us to wait for him while he paid his respects to my lord, saying that he wished to hear the account of our sojourn in privacy, as soon as he could return to us. But he had not long been gone when a message came summoning Hal to attend Her Grace, who, for some strange reason, had taken it into her head to go early abroad in her chair, and although he went to plead her indulgence, she would neither excuse him nor delay her departure for a single moment. Myself, however, she was quite ready to leave for once behind, and indeed seemed but too glad to have Hal's company without my own, so that, as I watched them off, I had some faint misgiving that she had arranged it so on purpose. Mr. Booker, however, who had come down just as they were starting, and had put Her Grace into her chair with a courtesy that few men could have equalled, and none, as I believe, could have excelled, said nothing save in reply to her greetings, and at this I thought Hal looked not a little disappointed.

"I have some questions to put to you con-

cerning this young usher of mine," the lady said to him; "so mysterious a personage I have never run across before, nor one with so close a tongue as to his own affairs, or so impertinent a one in regard to those of other people. My lord says you know some good of him, which I shall be glad to learn. Is it for this that you take such interest in his fortunes?"

"Your Grace forgets that it is a part of my business to have many interests, and to know many things."

"Well, well, sir, keep your knowledge of my lord and myself in your own breast, if you please," cried the lady (so easily did he succeed in putting her off the track in this case); "you make my flesh creep with your prophecies, and I want no glimpse of what is coming!"

"Your Grace need have no fear," our patron answered gravely; "the future contains all the happiness we look for in it, madam." As the chair was lifted, he bowed low, while Hal started beside it, a look of protesting resignation settling about his boyish mouth.

"You and I will have our little talk, John," Mr. Booker said to me, and linking his arm in mine, we made our way together to the one

shipshape room in the whole establishment, namely that in which Hal and I were quartered.

"Our young friend seems easily to have assumed the air and look of a courtier," our patron began, when once we were settled here; "how likes he the life, think you, John?"

"I know it is irksome to him, sir," I answered, "for though a gentleman he cannot keep himself from being, yet he hath little sympathy with those who count themselves as such at Whitehall, and he longs as much as myself for your permission to leave the court again!"

"Nay, nay, John. There is no question of permission between us," Mr. Booker replied kindly. "You are under no obligation to obey me. You are free to go and come as you will. I but sent you here that Hal might see the life our monarch loves best to lead, and to give his case chance to grow and work upon itself. Our actions never hasten events, John, except when we would work evil. This was but an experiment, that Hal may know which life it is that pleases him when the time comes for him to choose. And now for some questions: Have you seen aught of her whom you call 'my lady' since your encounter with her and M. Duval upon the road?"

I told him no, and how my dear boy had watched in vain, and waited for some sign of her, and in his eyes I saw the sympathy that touched me and the helpful interest.

"Be not anxious, John," he said. "There is no need. If I am not mistaken this lady hath other business to occupy her now, and we have little necessity to think of her at present. So we will put her aside, as Hal sometime will be content to do, perchance. And now for another personage: I hear His Grace of Richmond hath returned to court. Have either of you encountered him?"

"Sir," I cried, "there is no other man I wish so much to speak of;" and then I related to him all that had befallen us the day before, both at Whitehall and at the Duke's house, and afterwards I went on to explain the strange thought that had taken possession of me that morning while Her Grace was asking questions.

Mr. Booker heard me until the end of my story, and then for a moment sat with his head bent down in thought.

"Think you, John," he finally asked, "that anyone save yourself hath noticed this resemblance between them?" And I told him no, because Hal had so seldom a scowling face,

while His Grace had as seldom any other. Once more the silence came between us, and then our kind patron leaned forward and placed his hand upon my knee.

“ John, you have wondered much why I take so great an interest in your affairs,” he said in his kind way. “ It is for two reasons, each in my own mind of equal import. One of them you shall know sometime, when the future shall work out its own way, and I shall be bereft of the only earthly treasure that I value. The other reason I may quickly explain to you, and it was that I might have the chance for it that I induced Her Grace to be so energetic this morning, and to take Hal out of the way. You must know, John, that once I had a friend to whose goodness I owed as much as one man may owe another. So sweet and simple and pure was his mind, bred as he was in the school of a great philosopher, who was our common teacher, that the life which from his rank belonged to him became early abhorrent to his nature. Although a man of very loyal family—a man whose father had even begged permission to lay his own head on the block to save that of his sovereign—yet was my friend bound by conscience to the cause of freedom and the love

of God. And so when Charles the Second came back in triumph from his exile, and opened his ribald court at Whitehall, this man forsook name, and home, and family, and set out with only his motherless young son for company, and in his heart the hope of freedom, to find a life of quiet contentment in a distant land. In the Virginias the late King had given to his father a grant of land, and upon this he had wished to establish an estate befitting to his birth, and at the same time a life in accordance with his tastes. His elder brother, with whom the title and estates in England rested in event of the old Duke's death, was a man of quite different nature; a firm royalist who had no patience with his conscience, and a fierce hatred for the Commonwealth (though he kept it under present good control for prudential reasons), while a younger brother, but a few years older than the son of my friend, had already dipped into the life of dissipation and the search for amusement that was soon to become inseparable from the court. Finding no sympathy, then, in his own family, with his heart still mourning over the early death of his wife, and having little pleasure in anything save the companionship of her son, it is scarcely a matter of wonder that

he turned away from England gladly, to find solace in the new world. At Bristol, from which place he sailed, there was no one to wish him God-speed but myself and my little daughter, who went with the tears we elders could with difficulty repress, to take leave of him who had been her boyish playmate and sweetheart. It was a gallant boy, and he did his best to comfort her with promises of a speedy return, though his father held out no such hope for him. So we watched them sail away with heavy hearts—my little Pen and I—and, John, their ship was never heard from more. Yet through all the six years that have since passed by, I have watched and waited patiently, for I felt that one, at least, of these two still lived upon the earth. For the stars have never lied to me so far, and what could I do but trust what they told me. And so, when the time was come, I knew of your approach, as I have told you, and as soon as I saw Hal's face, his father once more stood before me. For myself, I want no other proof than this, and yet a chain of evidence hath been forged for us by others, and had you but the sword Hal's father wore, we should need no further means to convince whom we would of his iden-



tity. But this, John, is to me a matter of the smaller import, for my chief desire, as I have said, is first to lead Hal back to memory. For this strange trick of mind was a thing I had not counted on, and I had hoped (when I saw he had no recollection of myself) that something in this London life might strike a chord of memory, for 'twas here his father lived while the boy was growing, although his life was quiet. And now tell me, John, in your observation of him since you left me, have you seen no glimmer of recollection come to him, no sign of some awakening ?”

“ Sir,” I answered sadly, “ his mind hath, I think, but one concern, and that is a far greater one now than desire for knowledge of his origin.”

“ You mean the pain that has come to him through her whom you call ‘ my lady ’ ? ”

And I told him simply “ yes.”

“ Love cures love, sometimes,” he said reflectively. “ We shall see presently. As you know, and as Hal himself by this time must know, this lady is not worthy of his homage, though weakness to her own heart is her chief cause of fault in this affair. And as for Hal, now that you know the ground I stand upon,

and that I love him because I believe his father was my friend, you will scarcely think my wish to aid him peculiar, nor my interest in yourself amiss, after all that you have done for him ? ”

I did not stop to assure him of my gratitude, since I knew it was a thing he had no wish for, but instead I asked him what we were to say to my boy when he came back, for I knew how he would be aflame with eagerness to learn of our patron's plans.

But Mr. Booker smilingly cautioned me to take no thought, but to let the future take care of itself.

“ Were it merely the question of Hal's identity,” he said, “ it would be easy to proceed. But that I care the least for. What I want is to lead him back to memory, for what is rank without the recollection of it ? And he will be the easier satisfied now, since you tell me that his desire for name and fortune is drowned in the love he bears my lady, and that all he wants is to get away. Her Grace is a far more difficult one to satisfy, John. I have told her again how the boy's brain was twisted, as you had done before, and explained that in all probability he was but a simple gen-

tleman. We must have no publicity in the matter, and both my Lord Duke and his lady have one little failing in common."

I then went on to tell him about our meeting with Will Hanley, and how the day before he had left the Duke's house privately, and all that Mr. Mount had told us of the matter. To this recital he listened gravely, and asked me many questions concerning our connection with Will, and his standing and behaviour with my lady.

"She treated him always with the scorn she felt for his treachery—and it was beautiful, sir," I said with a smile of recollection, "to see him shrink before her eyes."

"A scorn she has now to feel for herself, poor lady," our patron said, softly, and as I heard his pity, a vision of my lady's face as it looked sometimes in her softer moods, came vividly before me, and for a brief moment I thought of her without a touch of malice in my heart. Yet was it a very passing thought, for with her face there surged into my mind such a rush of memory for all that her coming had cost us, that I started up with an exclamation of angry impatience.

"Sir, she hath seen the sword," I cried.

"She hath a knowledge of her own, besides. She hath led my boy hither with fair promises to aid him. Must he be kept longer in suspense? May we not find and force her to tell us what she knows?"

"Presently, presently, John," he answered, with the calm that always shamed my vehemence. "There is no need for us to hasten things, and no good plan is aided by the forcing of events."

"I have waited patiently for six long years," I said sullenly (for a man with this virtue about him likes nothing so little as to receive a rebuke for want of it), "and now all I have learned is that Hal's eyebrows are like His Grace of Richmond's, and that you were, perchance, his father's friend. Is this all that I may know of him, sir?"

"What more can I prove to men, John?" he asked me. "Had I the sword his father wore, no doubt the sight of it, with our other evidence, would convince the King, should we wish to approach him in this matter. But until that is in our hands, is it not better to speak no names, and so arouse no enmity?"

I hung my head in shame for my outburst, and again a rush of feeling came over me. But

this time it was a great longing and love for my Betty that filled my heart to bursting, and I cried:

“ Sir, may I not cross the sea to fetch it ? ”

“ Nay, John, there is no need,” he answered. “ I already have sent a messenger.”

## CHAPTER XVII.

SURELY there is much in this world to try the mettle of a man, but of all the varied experiences which I have been called upon to endure, perchance the just resentment of Her Grace of Albemarle had nearer made me flee away in abject terror than any other thing. And this, too, when myself was but the object, secondarily, of her wrath, a scapegoat upon whom it was her pleasure to load epithets which I cannot here set down as coming from a lady's lips. For when, somewhat late in the day, she came back in her chair, I, by ill luck, was the first to see her entrance, and stepped forward, with my happiest air of courtliness, to assist her in alighting. And so, when she struck aside my outstretched hand, and stepped from her chair with neither aid nor dignity, I looked in sheer amazement at her, and then, for the first time, noticed that Hal was missing. With face crimson with anger, and eyes ablaze like bits of charcoal set aglow, Her Grace was an object to make many a better man cringe,

and wish the sea was nearer. For a moment she glared at me in silence, save for a kind of hissing sound that with every breath issued from her lips, and then came forth a deluge of words which made even the lash of M. Duval's whip seem tame in comparison. Like hail-stones they flew about, and clattered, and struck, and rebounded, and began again, until I had nearly hugged my elbows to my head, like a defenceless man who strives to ward off a blow. And then, when a faint hope arose within me that her breath was nearly spent, she seemed, of a sudden, to imbibe from some hidden store a new lease of strength and variety of cutting epithets, so that my brain awoke almost to a kind of admiration for her as the torrent poured upon me. For so suddenly and forcibly, and like the rushing of some mighty waterfall, did this strange gift of Her Grace's overwhelm me, that only an occasional word came to me with any meaning, and all that I realised at first was that some act of Hal's had caused her anger. Seeing the utter uselessness of attempting a word in defence, I stood as still as possible, waiting for the storm to pass; and when the first rush of it was over, I noted with as much amusement as the time

allowed, how the grooms and foot-boys had arranged themselves in a crescent, behind Her Grace, and looked at me, as I stood deserted before them, with a light of sympathy mingled with the pale fright in their faces. How long this show had continued I know not (but I think Her Grace was about to command her fellows to set the dogs upon me), when my lord, with Mr. Booker in his company, came suddenly into the court yard. At sight of his lady's condition, my lord faltered, while an expression of concern and dismay spread itself over his face, and he stood still, leaving Mr. Booker to advance alone. Now had any man told me that the brave general could be daunted, I had before been quick to give the lie to him, but now (while none shall call him cowardly therefor) had any man averred the contrary, it had seemed as much incredible. Her Grace either saw him not, or else she chose to ignore his presence, although she turned her attention from my beaten self to my worthy friend and patron. But Mr. Booker was not a man as other men are, and the torrent of her rage seemed to pass him by untouched. Indeed the very calmness of his eyes, as they fixed themselves upon her, seemed to pierce the heart of her anger,



and render its effect impotent, for she suddenly paused in the midst of her harangue, and looked at him with quivering lips and nostrils.

"A sweet pair you have sent me," she snapped out, and paused while he calmly watched her, and then, without another word, she turned and, followed humbly by her frightened maids, pushed her way through the crowd of foot-boys, who scattered right and left to give her room. As she passed my lord, she paused long enough to snap her fingers with a loud report in his very face, so that he started back as though a ball had struck him, and stood staring until, had I been less personally implicated in the affair, I had almost laughed aloud to see him. When the lady had disappeared, and my lord with cautious steps set out to follow, Mr. Booker, who all this time had said no word, approached Her Grace's chairmen, and questioned them as to the cause of the disturbance. From them we learned that the lady, after having attended to some trifling affairs that morning, had found herself at Park time near the Mall, and had been minded, therefore, to see who would be that day on show. As she reached the Park, a chair had been carried rapidly past them, and, without a word of

excuse, Master Hal had deserted his post and given chase. Her Grace, in a quick rage at this rude behaviour, had commanded her fellows to follow, but the other chair had wound so rapidly in and out among the trees and the crowd of people, that her men had quickly lost sight of both it and Her Grace's truant usher. Left thus unattended, and exposed to the rudeness of a troop of gallants, who, either not recognizing Her Grace in so strange a plight, or else taking the opportunity to play upon her in her unprotected state, had followed her chair and tormented her into a white heat of rage, to their vast enjoyment. So she had screamed to her chairmen to take her home, there to ease her resentment, and exercise her tongue upon the first unhappy mortal who should present himself, and this, by ill luck, turned out to be John Hadder. This, then, was all we could elicit from the chairmen, and, indeed, was all they knew about the affair, for their part in it had been simply one of passive obedience to orders, and never having been seamen, how could we look for development of the observing faculty in them? So we left them to sup their ale, and turned our thoughts to the strange behaviour of which my dear boy was guilty.

To be sure a guess was possible as to the occupant of the chair he had pursued, but as to what we should do about it, our opinion differed. Mr. Booker thought that it was best to let things take their course, feeling sure that a few hours at the most would bring Hal safely to us, with a new adventure to relate. But so anxious was I to go forth in search of him (partly, perhaps, that I might run no risks of another meeting with Her Grace until time had cooled her temperature), that, seeing how I chafed under the confinement, he finally sanctioned my doing this, and so I sallied forth alone, while our kind friend stayed to prove his bravery in trying how he could pacify the lady, and to be on hand should Hal return without my finding him.

It was growing towards five o'clock in the afternoon when I started, and having no idea in which direction my search should lie, I wandered first towards Whitehall. Here I found no one visible, but learned that some gaming was in progress in the Queen's side, and that all the court was there assembled. Knowing that this was no place to look for Hal, I went away again, and began to wander about the streets with no definite point in view, until I

finally found myself in the Strand, near Exeter House. And as I reached this place some one touched me on the shoulder, and, turning about, whom should I see but young Mr. Jermyn.

"From the way you gaze about, I should say you were out for the pleasure of exercise, Master John," he said, "and yet it is far from a comfortable way in which to treat oneself. Or is it for our young Adonis that you are searching?"

"Sir," I cried eagerly, "do you know his whereabouts?" For he had laughed softly to himself, as he put the question like a man who had information in him.

"It is not impossible, Master John, by no means impossible," he replied, still eyeing me and smiling. "To tell you the truth, I am somewhat disappointed in your young friend, for I had looked upon him as a paragon of strength and virtue, and had some thought of writing a sonnet in his laudation. I had envied him, too, you understand, for the superior structure of his heart—the unsusceptibility of his affections. It hath been a jest among us that none of the Queen's maids, nor even those of her Royal Highness, the Duchess of York, nor my Lady Castlemaine herself, could obtain

from him one glance of admiration. And so we have said that if only he could have seen this one or that one, and, above all, if he could have seen Miss Stewart—La Belle, you know, John, the sweetest beauty the court can ever boast, I think—if his eyes could but behold this lady, we swore that his heart would melt like lead before the fire. A little wager, indeed, was laid, John, between a certain gentleman and myself that your Hal would not escape the infection yet, and a month or two was given for this grace to reach him. And so to-day, when I went to St. James, with the rest of the world, and saw our young gentleman suddenly desert his fair patroness and start after a chair that had been carried rapidly by, why I joined myself to the cavalcade, to learn what such behaviour meant in a young Puritan gentleman from the colonies. A pretty chase it was, to be sure, Master John. Young Praise-God-Barebone—nay, do not be annoyed, John; it is a name by which the King hath sometimes called him by, and after a very godly man, I promise you—had by this time caught up with the chair, almost, and walked a few yards behind the tail-man. So I placed myself a little further back, where I had been plainly visible to one less occupied

in his own affairs. But Master Hal never once looked round, and kept his pace like a lurcher, losing or gaining never so much as an inch. Straight across the Park we went, skirting the Mall, where the Duke was playing, though we did not pause to salute him, and so on to the Spring Gardens and the Haymarket, until we came to Piccadilly. And there, in front of a certain house, the chair that led our procession came to a halt, and we behind it did likewise. Now all this time I had no glimmering glimpse, even, of the occupant, nor, I think, could Hal have had, and this seemed strange to me, for the curtains were tightly drawn, and no fair hand had parted them. And yet our gay young gentleman paused, and watched with what seemed bated breath, until the gates were shut behind this hidden charmer. Had she glanced out (for the chair was a lady's, John, with no mistake permissible)—had she glanced out, I say, the lady must have seen us gaping one behind the other; but she had other concerns, apparently, and kept her fair face well hidden. After the great gates had closed again, Hal stood quite still before the house, looking up at its windows, and having no intention, so it seemed, of moving again that day. So, being

wearied, somewhat, with the rapid pace I had kept up, I went across the way to a little inn, and took position there, where I could watch him comfortably. He stood, I should judge, for near an hour, as motionless as a post, and just as I was despairing of any further occurrence I saw a foot-boy run hastily out, and put a bit of twisted paper into his hand. Now this, John, was something like, and I had given much to know what news was in it, for Master Hal's face went red, and then as suddenly paled again, and I saw he could scarcely breathe. I had started to run across the street, to offer my help to him, when I saw him crush the paper in his hand, and step aside to let a coach pass by him. This, too, paused before the gate, and who should alight from it but His Grace of Richmond. My lord, it is evident, hath greater affections than those he lavishes upon Master Hal, and he sent him a dark scowl, I promise you, when he caught him staring at the house himself proposed to honour with a visit. However, no word was spoken, and Hal, after my lord had disappeared within, stood silently as before. And then, to my further surprise, the foot-boy came out again, and spoke to him, and the next thing I knew the place had swallowed

him up, also. Well, John, since you and this young gentleman are such close friends, you, doubtless, are not surprised at what I have been relating to you, and had you been in my place, you would have gone away, to leave the adventure to take care of itself. But my little wager, John, was like to be money in my pocket, so I stayed on, and ate as bad a dinner as was ever introduced to my stomach, at this same little inn I told you of, all the time keeping a careful eye upon the house opposite. And presently Hal came out, with his face as white as a ghost's, and his head between his shoulders, and after him came my lord, with his as black as thunder, and I saw him kick a link-boy who got in his way, half across the street. But I had seen enough of Hal's share in the matter to make good my wager, and my interest now was to know more of the lady. So I let your young friend go his way, John, which was the opposite way to that which my lord had selected, and I know no more about him. But a word in your ear, Master Seaman—if I had the power, I would in your place put a curb to his ambition. It scarcely does for a young spark in his condition to meddle with the affairs of men like my lord. Sometimes strange things befall them,”



Now I know well that in theory a man must always keep a coolness in his head, but in practice I find that many things are different. And these foul suspicions of my boy—though only natural, perhaps, upon the face of things, had I paused to consider—so irritated me in my great anxiety for his safety, that I did not stop to think how much Mr. Jermyn had helped me by his tale. And so, instead of thanking him, I exclaimed in anger:

“Sir, is your mind so stained and foul that you can see nothing but its reflection in every one about you? The devil take you and your wager. If you spread this dirty tale about, I will call you a liar, sir, and prove my word to your satisfaction.”

But Mr. Jermyn, so far from being angered by my silly outburst, only laughed his chuckling, complacent laugh.

“Pull in your ropes, old cock-a-lorum,” he said; “my wager hurts no one save the man who loses, and that, I pray, may be our gay friend, Fielding. But sure, such a David and Jonathan hath never been since the original pair, as you and your young Hal. I would give my lady-love, had I some one to stand up for me so. But there is none, so let me end

my story. I waited in the inn until nearly dusk, hoping to see the lady come forth once more, for I confess I had great curiosity to know who she might be. She came not, however, and feeling myself aweary with such close confinement, I went back to my lodgings in Exeter Street, for some necessary refreshment. There I stayed an hour and supped in comfort, but being not content with this, I needs must sally forth again in hope of learning more of this interesting affair, and the first man I saw, John, was yourself. For want of a better chance I followed you, thinking you might lead me to the sequel of my adventure. But my patience has some limitation, and when I saw you like to walk on the whole night through, I decided to come up with you, and now, it seems that I have chased a wild goose, for, from your interest and apparent vexation over my story, I gather you have even less information than myself."

"Since you have so kindly borne with me, sir," I answered, "I will say that my information ends with knowledge of Hal's departure from his post this morning, and that now I am out to seek him."

"And I, to gratify my curiosity regarding a certain lady," rejoined Mr. Jermyn. "And

so it seems that our business is connected by a link or two, and though, as a usual thing, one man is better than two, in this case I shall not be sorry for your company if, in turn, you care for mine. I am on my way now, Master John, to hold an interview with a fellow of mine whom I left on guard at the little inn in my absence. Should he have nothing to report, I may take his place again, to see what the night will bring forth."

I had some misgivings about the business he had in hand, for I liked the idea of spying upon my boy but little, and besides, I was undecided whether I should not rather find Hal at my Lord Duke's house by this time than abroad. For I doubted not that he would take his first opportunity to return there, having no conception of anything like Her Grace's anger against him, and little dreaming that in deserting her he had committed a crime so unpardonable. But, notwithstanding this, Mr. Jermyn's tale had so aroused my wonder that, in the end, I could not bring myself to leave him to go on with his adventure alone, and so we started off together, with his arm linked through mine in very friendly fashion.

It was now quite dark, save for the flaring

links here and there, and we made our way through the streets with the difficulty that night must ever entail, but quietly, for there were few people abroad. We walked rapidly, and mostly in silence, leaving the Strand for Cockspur Street, and thence along the Haymarket, and so again to Piccadilly. I had begun to wonder whither my companion was leading me, and whether I had not been a fool to go so far with him, when suddenly a confused sound of shouting behind us caused us to come to a halt. In the distance, from the direction in which we had just come, was a mass of wavering, glaring light, which was approaching rapidly. We stepped back into the shadow, therefore, to see what this might mean, and as the light came nearer, found that it was caused by the bunching together of a great number of links—some forty or fifty of them, perhaps—the bearers of which were running wildly about a dark object in the midst of them, and shouting as they ran.

“A funeral, no doubt,” Mr. Jermyn said, and so we came forth from our hiding-place, to see what we could of it. But a closer view still revealed the fact that the dark object which the links were lighting was nothing else

than a chair, carried by two of the ordinary street men, who were shouting as gleefully as the link-boys themselves, as they swung rapidly along with their burden. The curtains of the chair were pushed back, and so strong was the light from the dozens of flaming torches, that the occupant was plainly visible, and my heart stopped beating for a moment, almost, when I saw that it was Hal. As always, when his mind was deeply occupied, he sat with his head down and his eyes staring straight before him, quite oblivious to his surroundings, motionless, absorbed, buried in his thoughts. Mr. Jermyn plucked me by the sleeve, for I stood petrified in my astonishment at this strange spectacle, and was letting the cavalcade pass by, with no motion to stop its progress; but now we started on a run in pursuit, and in a minute had come up with it, flying among the link-boys so suddenly that they scattered for us in sheer amazement and alarm, thinking that they were beset by footpads. With Mr. Jermyn at my side, I ran up alongside the chair and called Hal's name. At first he did not heed me, but finally, when I reached in and touched his sleeve, he lifted his head and looked at me.

“ John,” he cried, “ you here ? What is all this ? What is wrong with you, John ? ”

The chairmen had set their burthen down, and Hal, with that dazed look in his face that had come sometimes since his battle with the sea, opened the door and stepped out. He looked around at the waving mass of links, like a man just waking from a dream, putting a hand upon my shoulder as if to steady himself.

“ What is it, John ? ” he asked again. “ Why are you here, with all this illumination ? ”

“ The illumination belongs to yourself, Master Hal,” interrupted Mr. Jermyn, “ and the explanation as well. Whither are you bound so publicly ? ”

My dear boy put his hand to his head and pushed back his periwig, as he had been wont to do with his own fair hair, and drew a long breath, and looked at me, but still he answered nothing. Mr. Jermyn, therefore, turned somewhat impatiently for explanation to one of the chairmen.

The young gentleman had engaged them, they told us, to bear him until he should stop them, in this direction, and when, one after another, the link-boys had offered him their services, he had neglected to send them off, so

that gradually the cavalcade had become what we saw, "And no fault," they made haste to add, "is it of ours, sirs."

"You are on the road to Clarendon House, Master Hal," Mr. Jermyn said, when the man had finished his explanation. "Is that, perhaps, your destination?"

As he put this pertinent question, a new emotion seemed to come surging through my dear boy's frame, and he pushed me aside, and shook himself like a dog just out of water, for the first time seeming to take note of the presence of my companion.

"My destination is where I please, and my business is my own, sir," he exclaimed; and then turning abruptly to the chairmen, he added, "Should this gentleman wish it, you may bear him, in my place, wherever he may designate, since I have no further use for you."

Taking a few shillings from his pocket he threw them among the link-boys, who forthwith dropped their blazing links and began a battle for gain, while Hal, seizing my arm, led me swiftly away from the disturbance, kicking aside the fallen torches as he went.

"You got my message, then, John?" he

asked, when we were free from the fighting rabble. "I had some fear that it would not reach you in time."

"And your fear was right, then, my boy," I answered him, "for no message hath been delivered to me. Still, as you see, I am here without one, though having dismissed my late guide so curtly, I must now ask you to lead the way."

As cheerfully and lightly as I was able I spoke to him, for the pain and weariness in his young face went to my heart, and so soon I could not question him. Glancing back, I saw that Mr. Jermyn had complacently accepted the place Hal had offered to him, and, having sent away all but one of the link-boys, was following us in comfortable enjoyment of the chair which Hal had vacated. The flare of the single link that ran beside it sent black shadows lurking through the quiet street, and as we came to an alley that lay between some small houses flanking the side of Bury Street, Hal suddenly seized my arm and drew me quickly into the little *cul-de-sac*. Hiding there, he placed his hand over my mouth until Mr. Jermyn, in his chair, had passed us, and then we waited thus, until the link was far enough away to give no



indication of our whereabouts. Then we emerged quietly from our hiding place, and began to follow my late companion at a greater distance. I saw that it was Hal's wish to escape him, and, at first, I wondered somewhat that a man of Mr. Jermyn's sagacity should allow himself to be so easily deluded. But as the chair, with its flaring light, went steadily on before us, it occurred to me that the business of its occupant had been in no wise changed by our manœuvre, and that whether we went before or followed made no difference in his plans, or, indeed, whether we were there at all, since his interest now was centred in the lady, and not, like my own, in Hal. We had gone but a short distance in this order when, suddenly, I saw a man dart from behind a post that stood in front of us, and run as hard as he could go, and softly, after the chair. This time I caught Hal's arm and stopped him, and we stood straining our eyes to see what this might mean. As the pursuer came up with the second chairman, I saw him make a light cut forward, as if with a rapier, and the fellow thus attacked, with a howl of terror and pain, quickly dropped his part of the burthen, and fled, screaming, into the darkness. Deserted by his companion, the

other chairman was not slow to follow suit, while the link-boy, waving his light aloft, and screaming "Thieves!" at the top of his lungs, took to his heels as well. The chair, thus dropped defenceless into the middle of the road, as we could just make out by the light of the receding torch, lay partly overturned, and so was become a sort of trap out of which poor Mr. Jermyn would not be able quickly to escape. We started on a run, therefore, to lend him our assistance, for we knew not what might have happened to him, since the defection of the link-boy had left the place shrouded in complete darkness. As we ran along I heard Hal, of a sudden, come full tilt against some one who had been making good speed in a contrary direction, and there was a momentary scuffle, which was over almost before I could come to a full stop. And then I saw the shadow of a man dart away from him and disappear.

"Again that same one of our oldest friends," Hal said, quietly, as he once more came up with me, "by name Will Hanley, John. For a moment his face was close to mine, and I could have smashed his head, had he not cut at me with his sword. Heaven grant that I may do him no mortal injury sometime, but I fear my

heart is ripe for it. And, John, he wears His Grace of Richmond's livery."

Though my prayer had been a different one, I made no reply, for we had come up to the chair, and were relieved to hear Mr. Jermyn's voice cursing vigorously inside. We set ourselves hastily, therefore, to right his vehicle, and to assist him out of it, and then we found the blood flowing from three several wounds in his unlucky body.

"Gad, the villain hath succeeded in pinking me easily," he exclaimed. "With a man less accustomed to such chances, it would have gone worse. Did you catch the brute? It is strange, but he made no attempt to rob me."

"The attempt was to rob me of my life, sir," Hal cried, "since I by rights should still be in that chair."

"Ah," drawled Mr. Jermyn, in his overdrawn, complacent way. "Then I congratulate you, Master Hal, that you preferred the use of your legs. It goes to demonstrate that a man is safer upon his natural supports. And yet, believe me, my body and my purse (but not my name) are ever at the service of a friend."

I noticed that as he strove to speak lightly thus, his voice grew faint and fainter, and so I

laid my arm about him, forcing him, much against his will, to sit down upon the ground while we stripped off his coat, to find his sleeve drenched in blood.

"I have felt my precious self all over," he said cheerily, "and find a cut in the arm of some length and breadth and thickness, and a scratch in the forehead that hurts nothing, and another in the palm of the hand, where I got hold of the brute's sword-point, contrary to the law of duelling. Gad, but I should like a chance at himself. The devil take those cowards of chairmen. Even the link-boy had courage to use his voice."

I twisted his kerchief about his arm, while Hal bound his head in another, helping him to wipe the blood out of his eyes; and as we finished this, far away down the street began to glimmer the light of rapidly approaching lanterns. Mr. Jermyn, too, perceived it, and raising himself unsteadily to a sitting posture, began vehemently to beg that we would leave him.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "you have some business of importance to-night, if I mistake not. I had some curiosity which, for the present, hath been taken out of me. But I pray you let this affair not interfere with what hath

called you hither. The watch is coming, and if it finds you here, you will not escape. I am quite safe. Pray let me not detain you."

We had no time to consider, for the lanthorns were almost upon us, and we knew that what our unfortunate friend said was true, and that, once in the over-zealous hands of the watch, there would be no escape for us that night, unless through use of violence against the King's officers. And whatever might be the nature of Hal's business, from the look in his face I knew that it would be ill to brook interference. So, being sure that we left poor Mr. Jermyn to fall into safe hands, we turned tail and ran away, with heels as light as ever were shown to foe. Some three or four hoarse voices shouted to us to halt, but we only ran the faster, and although we soon outdistanced them, came not to a full stop until the wall of the noblest pile in all London loomed high above us. And here Hal touched my arm, drawing me into the shadow of the gateway, and softly knocking.

"John," he said, "our business lies within this house of my Lord of Clarendon, as for some reason Jermyn has guessed; yet we are not here to hold conversation with my lord. My message, which you say did not reach you,

was but to ask you to attend me here to-night, in order that we may together see the end of what hath been a most unhappy day. It matters little how you found me, since you are here; and now I have not time to tell all that has happened to me since the morning. But, John, I have once more seen my lady."

"And she is here?" I asked.

"Both here and looking for us, John," he answered.

As he spoke, the little gate at which we stood was opened cautiously, and in a moment a woman's voice bade us enter. The gateway led into a little court which lay at the side of the great house. Through this we were ushered rapidly, and then through a great many rooms and corridors, and a lofty hall, the walls of which were thickly hung with pictures. Excepting our guide, a buxom girl of twenty or thereabout, who laid her finger on her lips whenever a rat squeaked in front of us, we saw no one, and the great dimly lighted rooms had an uncanny feeling of desertion. Going softly thus, we came at last to what, from the direction we had taken, I judged to be the left wing of the house, and here, before a door with a heavy hanging, we paused while our guide knocked softly.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

I KNOW not what emotion made my heart leap into my very temples at sound of the voice that bade us enter; but this I know, that as I followed my dear boy into the lighted room, the blood went from my face and left it as white and anxious almost as was his own.

“As usual, sirs, in your appointments with me, you are somewhat late!” was the greeting my lady gave us.

She had been seated before a table, engaged apparently in erecting an ambitious palace of cards. But as she arose she gave a little impatient push against it, sending her work fluttering gently to destruction. With hands resting lightly upon this ruin before her, she stood for a moment looking at us, while in return we gazed upon her speechless. For how can I hope to describe the radiant change I saw in her, yet how can I refrain from attempting it a little? No longer did my Betty's sombre cloak conceal her shape, and for the first time, as it seemed to me, I saw her. She was dressed,

I think (but my eyes were dazzled and uncertain, and I can be sure of nothing), wholly in black, set off with trimmings of silver and the gleam of many brilliants. Her neck and shoulders, I know, were bare, and so beautiful a contrast did the whiteness of her skin present to the dusky folds about it, that I wondered how another woman dare expose her charms or even conceive charm in herself should this one be near by. Her head, set with its familiar pride of carriage, was adorned only with its own wealth of hair, and her face, while slightly pale, but disfigured with none of the black patches which the ladies of the court affected, made me wonder how I had so often looked upon it with eyes that saw not. Her eyes blazed like two stars as she held them wide open to look at us, and they seemed to cast a spell about me until I was conscious only of a wish that she would let her lashes veil them as had been her more usual habit. We had no answer for the words she had addressed to us, but stood there staring stupidly, and finally, with a slight shrug of her shoulders, she turned away and began to slowly gather her fallen cards.

“ I am told that you have been at Whitehall, and so become acquainted with His Majesty's



show of beauties," she said in her familiar tone of sarcasm. "Why, then, should I cause you so great astonishment?"

I think it was the manner of her speaking, and perhaps more the fact that she had withdrawn the power of her eyes, which relieved the pressure in my mind, and allowed it to recall the scenes through which we three had passed together. At any rate, my feeling of strangeness for her magnificence suddenly gave place to more familiar memories, and I advanced with a low bow and kissed the hand she held out to me.

"Madam, there are no beauties at Whitehall," I said, "until yourself appears there to rout all present claimants to the title."

Now, I had thought this a fine speech, and from my heart (which is more) did I believe it; but madam threw back her head and let a little peal of laughter escape her.

"Ah, Master John," she said, "though you have struggled against it, you are still a courtier, and Whitehall, I think, hath improved you in both manner and appearance, though I trust it hath left alone your morals. But enough—we are not here to bandy compliments, though we are adepts at the pretty business. Sit you

down. We are friends again, I take it. Come, Master Hal, do not stand like a post, so far away. I assured you, did I not, in my message of this morning that I had forgiven you for your desertion of me in Portsmouth ?”

But my boy, still standing by the door and still apparently bereft of speech, answered her not a word, nor took his eyes away from her face. For an instant in turn she looked at him, and then threw a questioning glance at me.

“Are you ill, young sir ?” she said, “or is anything the matter ?”

“Madam,” I said softly, so that he could not hear, “madam, the boy is ill, as you well know, and only yourself can cure him of his grave disorder.”

“Were all so ready with tongue as yourself, John,” she answered curtly, “less time were wasted and more blood were spilt perchance. Master Hal, will you not come nearer ?”

She went towards him slowly with one hand outstretched, while Hal watched her progress with dilated eyes.

“I am little accustomed to making such advances,” my lady said smilingly, when at last she stood so near that her hand might touch him, and as she spoke Hal suddenly covered

his eyes with his hand for a moment, and when he looked again the blood leaped into his face, and a long, deep sigh came from his very heart. And then he seized the hand she extended to him, and covered it passionately with kisses. The next instant I saw my lady snatch it hastily away, while a cry of astonishment escaped her.

“What has happened to you, Hal?” she cried. “Who, what has done this?”

She stood with her hand held at arm's length, and I saw with dismay that her fingers were stained a dusky red, and with a spring I reached my boy and grasped his wrists, which he held out to me in a kind of bewilderment.

“It is nothing, madam,” he stammered. “A footpad beset us as we came hither, and in the scuffle his sword must have pierced my arm; it is nothing. Forgive me, madam, that my blood should stain your hand.”

And then a strange thing happened. As I glanced up from my business of looking to the ugly gash that extended across my dear boy's wrist, I saw my lady's face grow suddenly as white as Hal's own, and she started back as if some unseen hand had struck her.

“It is false!” she cried. “I know nothing of this. Attacked on your way hither? On

my life I know nothing of it. Did you see the footpad ? What kind of man was he ? Speak ! ”

I waited a moment for Hal to obey her, but as he did not I answered in his place.

“ Madam, it was Will Hanley ! ” and as I spoke that name my lady sat hastily down upon a chair as though her strength had failed her, while her eyes still were fixed in a kind of horror upon the blood that stained her fingers. And sitting so, she murmured as if it was her inmost thought which spoke, “ My lord, my lord, dearly shall you pay for this ! ”

Hal snatched away his hand, which I had roughly tried to bind, and a deep flush spread itself over his fair face.

“ Madam, may I wipe it away for you ? ” he said. “ Madam, madam, I assure you it was nothing. I will be truthful, madam. The footpad did not harm me. His Grace and I had a little difference—that was all. It was a matter of honour, and we met in Hyde Park this afternoon. But it was nothing, madam. Upon my word, His Grace is uninjured. It was quickly over, and no harm was done. Even John here knew nothing of it. Madam, may I wipe the blood away ? ”

“ If you can, Hal—if you can, ” she answered

dully, while my heart stood still with this thing that I had heard. "Oh, Hal, Hal," I cried, and stopped, for I had met my lady's eyes, and there was nothing left for me to say. He brought a kerchief of dainty lace from the table, and, kneeling beside her, laid her passive hand upon the sleeve of his coat, while he gently rubbed away the stains that clung to it. She watched him in silence, and I saw her face grow gentler, as sometimes I had seen it do while he talked with her on board the "Queen." And not knowing what else to do, I waited quietly beside them. When he had succeeded in removing all trace of those red marks, my lady leaned forward and softly placed her hands upon my boy's broad shoulders as he knelt before her.

"There are many better women in the world to merit your love, Hal," she said in a low voice, "as there are men, perchance, were I able to realise it, to better merit mine than does my Lord of Richmond. And yet have I promised to wed him, Hal, well knowing that he is unworthy even of such love as I can offer him."

"Madam!" Hal gasped, starting away from her, but she clutched the shoulders of his coat and held him.

“Listen,” she said, “for there is a story which I wish to tell you now, although I know not if it is worth the telling. Once, Hal, there was a certain lady-in-waiting at Whitehall who had the misfortune to attract the favour of His Majesty. Heaven had given her a face too notable to pass without comment through the world, and a nature which, while it recognised the despicable hollowness of its surroundings, yet had not strength to subdue the love of gaiety and admiration which was its only birth-right. And so while she met with coldness the compliments which the King sought secretly to shower upon her, at first she could not, in her weakness, repulse them openly. Meeting with this indifferent success, however, His Majesty’s pursuit grew hotter, until at last there was even talk of divorcing the Queen, that her maid of honour might take her place. But the lady, knowing well what would be the outcome of this monstrous thing, did not aspire to the station opened to her thus; and, besides, she had no love for His Majesty, having given all of it that she possessed to another man. And this, Hal, was to a young man of somewhat evil repute even in the court of King Charles the Second—a man who loved wine and women

collectively, and was worthy of the good of neither. And yet, when he would, so sweet a personality could he assume, so winning could he make his manner, and so tender his voice and eyes, that this lady, even while she knew so well his life, could not force her heart to withstand his person. At first it was merely to have pleasure in circumventing his royal master that my lord lavished his attentions upon her; but when she made no effort to repulse him, his native selfishness came uppermost, and he sought his wine and his boon companions oftener than he came to her. But meanwhile the King, not knowing how her heart was panting for the love that was denied her, and seeing only the sadness in her face and indifference to his advances, became in his jealousy madly importunate, until the lady in her distress knew not how to save herself. My lord had not visited her for days, and she heard tales of him that made her heart grow old. And so her one thought became how she might escape His Majesty, and leave the place that meant no less than torture to her now. There was a man whose gift it was to read somewhat of the destiny of all the world, and in her extremity the lady turned to him to aid her. In

order that no one might recognise her, she left Whitehall one night muffled carefully, and with no other one to bear her company than her faithful woman. She made her way thus to a certain house in London where this man might be found, but to her disappointment she was told that he had left the town, and so, not knowing what other course to take, she set out to follow him."

"To Havant, madam?" I interrupted, for my lady had paused to release Hal from his kneeling posture, motioning him to a low stool beside her, where she still could keep her hand upon his shoulder.

"Ah, Master John, I had forgotten you!" she said, turning to look at me. "I see I have no chance at concealment with so astute a listener. To Havant this lady went then, since you know so much of her strange story. And, perhaps, you know what she learned there also?"

"It is true, madam, that Mr. Booker hath told us how a lady visited him, and what the stars advised for her, since her story had a bearing on our own."

For a moment my lady was silent, thinking something over in her mind, and then she turned again to Hal.



“Of your relations with this man I know nothing,” she said. “Nor of what he knows, or hath told you, either of yourselves or of the lady of whom we speak. She went to him, thinking that her person was unknown to him, or at least that her disguise was secure; and in the conference which followed he gave no indication that he knew more of her than she intended him to know. But since it seems that she was mistaken, you will, no doubt, remember that he told how her destiny led her across the seas, and that by following this course only could she find the solution for her trouble. For long it had been in her thought to seek some rest in France, where she had many and kind friends awaiting her, and so her mind turned thither kindly, and she made some hasty preparations for a journey. She arranged that only her woman and a single serving-man should accompany her, while none save her mother and one man, whom fate had made her trust, were to know her whereabouts. This man (whose business by a strange contradiction to the faith she had to put in him was that of a highwayman) was a Frenchman, Claude Duval by name, and he once had been page to the man who had won her love; and it was his misfortune also to

have loved this lady. One night in a fit of jealous rage he had struck his master, and but for her speedy interference with my lord had lost his life upon the spot. M. Duval had fled therefore, and, like many another man, in weakness took to wreaking his own disappointment upon his fellow travellers in the long road of life. Purely by chance he had overtaken the lady upon her journey to Havant, and he had insisted upon giving her his protection thither. To him she had revealed her intention of making the voyage to France (for he had some knowledge of her difficulties, and only wished to aid her now), and to him she had entrusted messages to her family. But when the time came for her to set out upon her journey, a sudden fear seemed to take possession of her mind. What was this journey to France to accomplish for her? How easily could her passage thither be traced! M. Duval might not, after all, keep faith with her. There were scores of people to know and report at Whitehall her presence there; a hundred things might render her conspicuous. A kind of panic seized her; a desire to fly far away where none should know or mark her; a pitiful longing to put the world between her and all that she loved and

feared. And so one night, when those whom she had trusted thought her safe on board the vessel which was to take her to Calais, this poor lady embarked with her faithful attendants upon a ship at Plymouth, and sailed away for the far-off Colonies. A quick and tempestuous journey had she, and a fitting ending came of it, for had it not been for the strong courage of a certain colonist she had not been alive to tell her story now."

Although she had glanced up at me and nodded, she seemed not to hold me in mind, for her eyes fixed themselves again upon Hal's downcast face, and she had let her hand wander until it reached his forehead, gently pushing back the hair that had concealed it.

"Nay, Hal, do not repulse me," she said, for he had started as she touched him and drawn again away. "I may caress you as a mother might almost. Do you know how many years lie between us?"

"Madam, I have never counted years in my thought of you," my dear boy answered, lifting his pleading eyes to her face; and then in her own I saw what I had never seen there before, the semblance of tears, and I was near forgiving her all the trouble she had caused us.

“ Hal,” she began more gently still, “ you were bred in that land, that cold and cheerless land, which so lately we have left together—you were bred there a fisherman. Until now you have lived a life full of honest adventure and activity, away from the vice and wickedness of man, unsoiled by contact with the world. But since you followed me to England, you have seen the place, and lived in it, where all that is, is of man’s device. Think you that this change has bettered things for you, Hal ? ”

“ Oh,” he cried, “ I hate it all—I hate it all! Madam, there was a time when I wanted back my memory, and all that I thought it meant for me! But now——”

My lady turned and looked at me with a little flash in her eyes, as if to say, “ You hear, John ? Then pray remember.”

“ And now,” she interrupted—“ now you are changed ? Now do you hate it, Hal ? Now hath it no charm for you, this strange, artificial thing we call life ? Let me finish my story. Upon that night, when, after a struggle with the sea that had nearly cost her life, the lady once more felt firm ground beneath her feet, almost the first thing she heard out of the confusion which surrounded her was a voice shouting some-

thing above the tumult of the storm—a voice so like—nay, the only voice it seemed to her that had ever possessed the power to move her heart! She stopped on the wet sands and listened with knees that shook beneath her and a heart that beat above the beating of the surf. She looked at the man who was supporting her, and was conscious that some words escaped her lips, but what they were she knew not afterwards. A kind of haze had come about her, and through it she saw suddenly the man beside her reel and fall into arms that came in time to aid him. Again the voice sounded in her ears, and, looking up, she saw this time from whence it came. A young man, tall, strongly built, dominant in that crowd of seamen, even in his dripping garments, had pushed her roughly aside and was giving anxious attention to her fainting companion. She looked into his face, and saw it white and strained, with brows contracted as he bent over his friend, and again her heart leaped to her throat until the pain of it was unendurable. In silence she made her way to the house that offered her hospitality; the peril through which she had passed, the knowledge that she was alone in an unknown land (for her woman and the serving-man both were miss-

ing)—all this forgotten in the strange sequel she had met with. The good people cared kindly for her, and she accepted in silence all their kindness, scarcely noticing what was done for her. Some attempt she presently made to question her entertainers, and from the mistress of the house and her sweet daughter learned enough to further inflame her wish for knowledge. To the tall young stranger then she applied herself, but so bound up was his mind in the state of his wounded friend, that from him also she could gather but scanty information. But all agreed in assuring her that the man who had been hurt in saving her life could tell her more of what she wished to know than any other. He had been brought to the same house which gave her shelter, and so, as soon as he regained his consciousness, she went to him. From him she gleaned with difficulty (for he seemed at once to suspect her of some evil design) the history of this young man's life, and it was in this tale that the lady beheld the fate which had lured her so far from her native life, for the recital of it conjured up in her mind the remembrance of another story which long ago had come to her ears. She recalled how she had heard that a certain nobleman had had

three sons, and how, upon his death, the title and estates had fallen to the youngest of them all. For, a few months before the old man's death his second son, taking with him for company only his young child, a boy of twelve or fourteen years, had sailed for the Virginia Colony, to inspect there a grant of land which years before the King had given to his father. And she had heard that no trace of his vessel had ever been found thereafter. Scarcely a month later his elder brother had been killed by a fall from a horse, and the old father, overpowered by this misfortune, had had no courage to rise above it. He lived but a week or two, she had been told, and then did the youngest son fall heir to all his possessions. And this youngest son was the man whom the lady had the unhappiness to love. Was it strange, therefore, that when she saw the young gentleman in the far-off Colony and heard his story, a great joy of revenge should take possession of her? For she beheld it in her power to return to England with one whom, as she had come speedily to believe, had the right to wrest from him who had neglected and humiliated her, all those possessions which he held most dear. Material proof as to the young man's identity consisted

only in some articles (to wit, a sword and some clothing) which were in the keeping of the Governor of the Colony, one Richard Bellingham by name, whom the lady had seen in England. And so, as soon as the young gentleman's anxiety for his friend's welfare was quieted, she persuaded him to set out with her for Boston, there to inspect what things were left to him. The journey brought forth all that she had hoped for and more. Upon the sword she found a mark which the nobles of that house bore always upon their arms; and, furthermore, there was scratched with the point of some sharp instrument near the hilt the two initials of his name. The clothing gave no clue, but the lady desired nothing more. Sure of her power to avenge the neglect my lord had caused her to suffer, confident that fate had led her thither with no other purpose than to put that power within her grasp, her one thought now was that she might quickly return to England. In order that her position might be the more secure, she decided that her best course would be to take with her the young gentleman whom she had so strangely discovered. His presence at the court she knew would make her story the more indubitable, and so without scruple



she began to raise some hope in his breast, and little difficulty did she meet with in obtaining his promise to accompany her. To her joy, she found that a ship was to sail within a day or two, and in this she determined to embark. To obtain possession of the sword, however, was not so easy a matter. For safe-keeping it had been given years before into the hands of Governor Endicott, and the present Governor, having lately come into authority, was still unknown to this young gentleman. Fearing that he might recognise her, and having no wish to make her presence known in the Colony, the lady had kept in retirement during her stay in Boston, and could not, save as a last extremity, bring herself to exercise her power of persuasion upon the Governor. For her inspection His Excellency had permitted the sword to leave his keeping only under the escort of one of his own serving-men, and upon condition that it be that night returned. There was but one man who could get it quickly from his control, and that was the seaman who had been wounded in the wreck. The lady, therefore, despatched her companion to his home in order that he might return with this man, should he by this time be able to endure the journey; if

not, he was to bring an order from his hand to be presented to Governor Bellingham. The ship was to sail upon the following morning but one, and all that day and night the lady watched and waited with what patience she could summon. But the morning came, and the time for sailing, and still she was alone. As long as she was able, by means of the exercise upon the captain of the vessel of all the power of persuasion of which she was mistress, she delayed the weighing of the anchor. But still no one came. And so she decided at last that the young man had weakened in his resolve, and knowing that this might be her last opportunity in many weeks to return to England, she determined to proceed alone, carrying only a story with her. It was then that a strange temptation came to her. Why should she do this thing for a mere boy who was a stranger to her? Left alone in the Colonies with neither friends nor influence to aid him, with memory of his origin gone no doubt for ever, why should she not use him simply as a wedge and nothing more? She could employ his story skilfully upon my lord to bring him to her terms, but to force my lord to surrender all his possessions afterward to this young sea-bred stranger would

be but to further sacrifice herself. And as this idea grew and shaped itself and took on definite proportions, it was with doubtful pleasure that she saw a little shallop bearing down upon the ship, and presently did make out that it held not only her whilom protégé, but also his wounded friend and another man besides. He stood, this boy (for he had seemed scarcely more to her), gazing with such eager wistfulness upon his face as the shallop came alongside that she once more felt her purpose waver. She recalled how the astrologer had told of two chances which would be offered to her, and what would be the outcome of her choice of either. And it was this thought that filled her mind as the three men came up on deck. It seemed that the delay in their appearance had been caused by the perfidy of one who was jealous of the young man's possible advancement, and had long held a grudge against the man who had so heartily befriended him; and on account of this sailor's treachery they had been forced to reach the ship with himself in company, and without the blade which meant so much to their cause. The lady saw in this circumstance a hindrance to both the plans between which she wavered. Accompanied by a

friend who bore him almost a father's love, and who knew all that could be known of his story (since he had made it almost), the young gentleman could not so easily be gotten rid of should she yield to the way that tempted her. On the other hand, should she try honestly to reinstate him in what she believed to be his rightful place, so long as the sword was left behind she had nothing but the word of this seaman with which to corroborate her story. And so through all the voyage the lady struggled with herself, and at its end still had her course to choose."

She paused again, looking at Hal with wistful eyes as he sat beside her, leaning his head upon his hand. This time he made no effort to escape as she gently touched his hair.

"Hal, can you not find it possible," she murmured, "to pity this poor lady somewhat? The life you hold so hateful had been her only life. She knew nothing of those lofty aims and pure ideals the sea can teach to men. Her one aim, her only knowledge had been the gratification of her senses; her one pursuit was no more than possession of him who had so carelessly won her love. Other, far greater men had loved and paid her homage, and she had

watched them go with no more than a smile of contempt. One good man loved her, as she saw, believe me, Hal, with infinite pain. And him she now had it in her heart to injure to gratify her selfishness. And so this lady came once more to England, determining to trust to what course chance should point out to her. For one night they arranged to lie in Portsmouth, but the next morning, at the time appointed for the setting out for London, she found that both her companions had deserted her. She despatched messengers in search of them, and waited for them an hour after the time she had fixed for departure, yet no trace of them could she find. Was it strange, then, that she should take this for a sign to proceed alone, to substitute her own interests for theirs, since they for the second time had failed her? Hal, do you think it strange?"

What his answer was I could not hear, but I knew that it meant acquiescence, and, as for me, a kind of black wonder had sprung up within me. What did she mean? What spell did she strive to cast about my boy that she spoke to him like this? Why did she look at him with eyes that would have melted ice, and the touch of her hand upon his shoulder, that was like a

thistledown in softness ? Why did she seek to bind him further with the soft fragrance of her voice, him who already was helpless in the fetters she had forged for him ? Rage against her surged into my heart once more, and I thought how pitiful it was to be a man and unable to strike a blow against a woman !

“ She had never told her name to these two men,” she began again. “ They knew nothing of her station. She saw more and more how easy it would be to follow the course towards which her heart was yearning. The young gentleman she had striven to aid had let some paltry thing come between them ; her duty to him was therefore done. But the lady had not reckoned upon one thing, as she learned before she had proceeded a dozen miles upon her lonely journey to London, and this was that the astrologer still watched the turning of her fortune. To her astonishment, she learned that this man had in some way communicated with her late companions, and that one of them at least was even then obeying his instructions. What might be his interest in them the lady had no means of knowing, but she felt an obstacle to her progress had arisen. She proceeded, however, to London with as great haste

as the heaviness of her coach permitted, and, once there, lost no time in summoning my lord to her presence. He came with greater eagerness than she had ever known in him, protesting his great joy at her return and the anxiety which her flight had caused him; and to her story which she told him, before her courage should have time to fail her, he assumed an air of indifference, saying that no fear could daunt him, since she once more was near. Upon this reception she had not counted, and in the happiness of it she soon came to forget almost her long journey across the seas, and the thing she had had it in her mind to do. A man high in the affairs of state, who had ever been this lady's friend, had offered her the hospitality of his house (for she wished not to make her presence known at Whitehall), and all in his power did he do to bring about the consummation of her union with my lord. So here did the lady dwell in some content and happiness for a few short weeks, while my lord endeavoured to gain the consent of the King, his master, to their marriage. But this consent His Majesty withheld, for reasons but too well known to all the world, alas ! and meanwhile there appeared at Whitehall two gentlemen from the Colonies.

Backed by she knew not what influence, entertained by a Duke of the King's own council, they came to wake her from the dream of happiness in which she had been dwelling. My lord, when he learned who these strangers were, came to her in a furious passion. He accused her of the grossest deception, asserting his belief that all the time she had been in secret league with his enemies, and that her real desire was to bring about his downfall. Hal, do you see? Can you understand what the presence of these two strangers at court meant to her? Bereft of his noble title, despoiled of his estates, the only possessions which he truly loved, my lord would care little for what was left to him. An honest devotion he could scarcely comprehend, and beside that which he was in danger of losing, this would mean nothing to him. He knew not what friends or proof these men had gathered that they dared to appear thus boldly at Whitehall, and from day to day he lived in fear of some disclosure, being assured that His Majesty would like but too well to hear this tale against him. Taunted by my lord for infidelity; distracted by fear lest in his angry dread of this young claimant of his title he should stoop, as more than once he had



threatened, to do him personal violence; maddened by the prickings of her conscience, which accused her and struggled constantly with her heart for love; which way to turn the lady knew not. And so in her extremity she be-thought her of the astrologer once more. No sooner had the thought come to her than she summoned a chair to bear her to his house; but again she found him absent, and she turned homeward with desperation in her heart. Upon her arrival, as her chair waited for the gate to open, whom should her eyes encounter but this same young gentleman from the Colonies, in whom all her thoughts were centred. He was watching her chair with a look in his face that swept her heart like a revelation, for she learned from it that he would understand her trouble. Hastily she sent a foot-boy with a message, begging him to wait upon her that very night, intending to throw herself upon his mercy. Hal, Hal, will you not have pity upon this lady?"

In sheer amazement I watched her as her voice rose in its sweetness of appeal. She did not demean herself by falling at his feet as a woman of less consummate skill in coquetry might have done, but instead she rose to her full height slowly, pushing back his hair with

her caressing hand until his eyes perforce must meet her own, filled with the tears that begged compassion from him. And then she looked down and waited.

I heard a voice cry sharply to him to take care, and knew not until afterwards that it had been my own. But no one heeded me. My lady never wavered in the silent earnestness of her appeal, until at last Hal put up his hands, and, grasping her wrists, held them as he rose to his feet.

"Madam," he said—"madam, what is it that you ask of me?"

With her face only grown more lovely as she now stood looking up at him, more irresistible, she answered :

"You have told me that this life is hateful to you. It is all the life I have. Why, if it is in your power, do you wish to deprive me of it? Hal, will you not be generous?"

"Hal, take care!" once more the voice—my voice rang out, but still he did not heed me. Instead, he looked down at her and smiled.

"Madam," he said earnestly, "my one desire is to serve you. What you ask of me is too small a thing to think twice about. Madam, I will never trouble you."

Her shoulders fell with a long breath of relief, and then she turned and looked at me. A soft colour had come into her cheeks, and a smile played about her lips to match the light which gleamed from her half-veiled eyes.

“ You hear, Master John ? ” she said. “ Was ever man more noble than this one ? Well may you be proud of him, sir ! ”

In some way the rough bandage I had bound about my dear boy's wrist had become loosened, and as she drew away her hand, she held it out once more adrip with blood. Some strange spirit seemed to move me, and, pointing to it with arm outstretched, I cried :

“ Madam, beware ! A dear price you pay for happiness like this ! Take care that it turns not to gall for you ! Madam, if harm comes near him, his blood is on your hand ! ”

But she was not looking at me. I saw her eyes pass beyond and through me, as it seemed ; the gleam within them gave place to a look that I could not fathom, and, turning swiftly, I found myself face to face with His Grace of Richmond.

It is strange how passions of the heart have power to transform the face of man and make it less than human before almost the definite

idea is born. As my lord's eyes fell upon Hal's face, which was turned in a kind of ecstasy upon her to whom he had given his birthright, such a look of black rage and hatred came into them that, with a bound, I placed myself by Hal's side, involuntarily resting my hand upon the hilt of my sword. The sudden movement caused Hal to look about, and, meeting those malignant eyes bent upon him, he drew himself up proudly, and returned the scowl with interest, but made no other salutation. My lord, with a vile oath, turned to madam, exclaiming:

"And so you have your plaything here again?"

With a cry that rang loudly through the room Hal sprang forward.

"You coward!" he panted. "You brute! You—you thief! Once to-day I spared your life, not knowing then that its only worth was this lady's love for it. But just now have I given you your very name. Sir, know you that the name you bear is mine—mine only? And that my one cause of shame is in that our blood is one? Know you——"

"Hal, your promise," cried my lady. "Have you so soon forgotten? My lord, I pray you do not anger him—my lord!"

But His Grace pushed her angrily aside.

"This boy is mad," he said, controlling himself with effort. "What proof has he to show to make good his claim to my name? Absurd! It is true, young sir, that you spared my life this morning, when any man of decency would have done the same, and had not boasted later. But here there is no chance of the slippery ground we found in Hyde Park. Sir, will you cross swords with me again? Your fellow here can see fair play for you. Miss Stewart, will you not do the same for me, or is your heart now avowedly upon the other side?"

I had my rapier ready in my hand, for what I knew not, and had started to interpose my person between my lord and Hal, but as the name by which he had addressed madam fell from his lips, the strength seemed suddenly to leave my knees, and I stopped still to stare at her. Miss Stewart! There was but one like this one who might rightly bear that name—La Belle! And the thought that came to me first with clearness was that of the wager Mr. Jermyn had told me of, and his certainty of winning it when Hal should have seen this lady. La Belle Stewart! All the tales I had heard of her came surging into my

mind, and in that brief moment I knew that of these, some, alas! were true, but most were false.

“Madam!” I stammered.

“Your answer, sir!” exclaimed the Duke, for Hal as well had heard that name and stood with a dumb pain of wonder in his face. And so it was left at last for madam to rescue us, and then it was that I saw her eyes gleam yellow like a hungry cat’s.

“My lord,” she cried, sweeping around in front of him—“my lord, I will give an answer! Since you have given my name to these gentlemen, let me thank you for the introduction. My lord, this young gentleman’s life hath just now been threatened by a man who long hath owed him a grudge, and who, within the last few days, as I am aware, hath donned Your Grace’s livery. This morning your new lackey helped to bear me in my chair upon a trifling outing when I wished for fresher air, and by sight of him did this young gentleman learn my hiding-place. To-night he is here at my invitation, and as well to your unworthy advantage. My lord, I learn to-night for the first time also that he suffers from a wound inflicted by your rapier, Your Grace, it seems, having attempted his life

in the honourable manner allowed by the custom of duelling. This boy, my lord, hath right to all you possess in the world, excepting one thing, that you value little, and he more than all the rest. Listen to me. It is still within my power to restore all that by right belongs to him. Think you that His Majesty would throw discredit upon aught that Frances Stewart might tell him? My lord, I say, beware! Should your rapier injure a hair of his head, the King shall know all!"

As changeable as her own moods had been my feelings toward this woman. Fascinated by her grace of mind and manner and mere outward beauty, fearing her, loathing her entire personality, despising her for weakness, marvelling at her strength, never had I known such admiration for her as at that moment. Her head was thrown proudly back, so that her eyes seemed to burn him in their depth of scrutiny. Her chest was expanded to the fulness of its tension, while her bosom heaved visibly with the emotion she strove to suppress. Close to her sides she held her arms, drawn with a rigid tightness, the blood-stains on her hand hidden in the folds of her black petticoat. So she stood, facing the man she loved—stood as

champion of another man whose birthright she had stolen!

His Grace snapped his half-drawn sword back into its scabbard, and turned with a snarl upon her.

"What is it you would gain?" he growled.

"Something, sir," she answered readily, "which I never have sought before—the pleasure which follows an unselfish action."

"Bah! And the King?" he asked with an ugly sneer.

For an instant I saw her lip tremble, while her eyes fell before the insult of his glance.

"The King hath been kind to me," she said slowly. "God save His Majesty! But you," she cried, once more lifting her head and taking a step nearer to him—"you, my lord, have heard! It is true that I love you, though for what reason God only knows! To-night I have gained for you your rank, your lands, your very name, and gained it at cost of a thing that is naught to you—my self-respect. In return, do you dare refuse when I ask your promise that no violence be attempted against this boy who hath sacrificed all his hopes for me?"

"I have no thought of harming him," His Grace said sullenly. "If one of my liveries ran



against him in the dark, why am I brought to account for it? The fellow is a bungler—that is all. If it will please you, since you are so fond of this young colonial, I will have the man dismissed. As to the claim against my title, there is no proof, and I tell you, madam, that no man insults a Stuart with impunity!”

“As for proof, sir,” I interposed, “the way is easy. There is one Mr. Booker who knew Hal’s father, and himself as well, but six years back. A boy may not wholly change his features in that time, though he may grow to manhood and be forgot by those who love him least. And even now is your brother’s sword upon its way to help us, since this same kind friend hath sent for it that he may show it to the King!”

But it seemed I was beneath His Grace’s notice, for he looked not in my direction, though I knew he heard my words.

“I came, madam,” he proceeded, as if my interruption had not occurred, “upon an errand which you know of. I had scarcely expected this reception after the last you did accord me. However, since you have so comfortably arranged matters for my advantage, if I may credit what you tell me, is it your intention still to carry out our plan?”

In spite of the air of bravado he assumed, I saw that his speech meant in reality no less than surrender unconditional to the pressure she had brought upon him, though how madam could demean herself to move him so I could not fathom. But as he spoke I saw her face once more relax and the tender light come into her eyes.

"Would that I had strength to withdraw," she murmured. "Oh, would that I had that strength! Sir, we shall carry out the plans. I will go—whither I know not."

For a moment she stood with eyes downcast and silent, and then, slowly lifting her head, she turned and looked at Hal. Through it all he had stood in rigid stillness, with that puzzle in his eyes as they were fastened upon her, and his face white and stern. Of my lord's presence he had seemed scarcely aware, and the gibes and insults thrown at him had affected him no more than they had the wall behind him. But now, as my lady turned the richness of her glance upon him, I saw him catch his breath with a painful effort which cleared his face again. Quietly she looked at him, and then went swiftly to him, and, catching his wounded hand in both her own, she raised it to her lips.

"Hal," she said, with her voice catching in her throat, "I cannot ask you to forgive me yet, but some time you will forget. And if"—she straightened herself again and looked at us each in turn—"and if—my lord, John Hadder, heed me well—I say—if at any time the forgetfulness that now shrouds this dear boy's past be lifted for him, upon that day, if he so desires, I give him back his promise!"

Once more she kissed Hal's hand, and then she turned to me and laid her own upon my sleeve, while a little smile came like a flower into her eyes.

"John," she said, "if sometimes I have seemed to not appreciate your worth and great devotion, I ask your forgiveness humbly. John, you have a great distinction, for you are the only man whom Frances Stewart ever strove to captivate, and failed." And then, before I could reply, she passed on to where my lord stood, scowling on us all, and laid her hand in his.

"John, will you come with me?" Hal said.

And so, as they stood together, these two, with happiness upon the face of neither, we passed with bowed heads before them, and a moment after found us once more in the darkness of the streets.

## CHAPTER XIX.

WITH my arm through his for sympathy, Hal and I stumbled along, walking blindly in the darkness with but one object in view, and that to leave Clarendon House behind us. Whither we went we scarcely noticed, and indeed it mattered little, for, now that Hal had given his solemn promise never to seek his birthright more, we were adrift with neither plan nor purpose, and one road was like another. Remonstrate with him for the thing he had done I could not, for I knew that his word once given, even though the way of it was strange and no man could hold him justly accountable, was as good as another man's solemn oath, and for me there was nothing to do but to accept this decision as final. I wondered how I was to look our patron in the face and tell him such a story. How could I confront Her Grace of Albemarle with no better explanation with which to quiet her anger than the dissatisfaction of my silence? How could I do aught, indeed, but my poor best to offer

silent sympathy to my boy in this hour of his tribulation? As for madam, I could pity her a little, even while in my heart I cursed her, for she had gained—what? No more than the hand of a man in desperate straits, and in exchange she had given her peace of mind, her self-respect, her very all, because she loved him! What happiness did she hope for, I wondered, what life did she hope to lead, what compensation did she look for that she gave so much to compass this? And yet—ah, madam, you were very beautiful! Even John Hadder knew it, and could hate you better when your eyes looked some other way.

What thought was in my dear boy's mind I cannot tell, but when we came at last to the river and must so stop our progress unless we took to water, he suddenly paused and spoke to me.

“Let us strike out for Portsmouth, John. There is nothing for us here,” he said, “and our Betty must be longing for a sight of you, old man.”

His voice, notwithstanding an air of assumed cheerfulness, sounded strangely thin and hollow, and indeed I started as he spoke, thinking some other man was near us. But

in a moment I had pulled myself together and answered :

“ As you will, Hal—as you will. We will sail for home right willingly, though we have some friends here who have been kind to us, and of them we must first take leave.”

“ No, no,” he cried, “ I have no friends but yourself, John! Let us go!” He grasped my arm again and turned me about, and once more we set off in feverish haste for nowhere. Knowing this demon of unrest which tormented him, and that only bodily weariness could get the upper hand of it, I tried to lead him by turnings almost imperceptible toward the house of my Lord of Albemarle, for I longed for Mr. Booker’s counsel, and knew no other course to take. But Hal quickly perceived my intention, and drew me aside once more, since I would not forcibly coerce him, toward the Bridge. And so I silently walked beside him, thinking this the way to quiet him, and that when at last he should grow weary I might lead him to what was our only home in London.

But the adventures of that sorry night were not yet over. As we strode rapidly along through the darkness of the streets, now almost still with the nightly loneliness, we saw two or

three men, preceded at a little distance by a single link-boy, come suddenly from a dark way that opened just in front of us, and hasten rapidly on towards the Bridge-foot. And by the light of the smoking link, although it was a very small one, I could see that these men, despite the fact that some effort had been made to cover it, wore the livery of the Duke of Richmond. More from carelessness than from any purpose, we set out to follow them, and presently as they went on they were met by a chair bearing some reveller homeward. As the chair was surrounded by two or three links, which threw out a brilliant blaze as they passed, we were enabled to see our men more plainly, and although they tried to fall back into the shadow, it wanted no other urging to make us set off at our best speed to overtake them, for the light had revealed to us no other than Will Hanley! Apparently they realised that they were pursued, for they increased their speed, and, finding that they could not outrun us, took to dodging artfully into the dark side streets. But their link-boy was like a will-o'-the-wisp, or more perhaps like an evil genius, to them, for no matter where they went, or with what quickness or subtlety they turned and twisted,

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his ear discovered and his flaring light sought out their whereabouts, in fear lest his compensation should escape him. We had no difficulty therefore in keeping them in view, though to come up with them was less easy. And so our chase continued until, seeing that they could not in this way escape us, Will and his companions came finally to a halt, being curious, no doubt, to learn who their determined pursuers might be. As they took their stand I put out my hand to stop Hal from running past me, for I had been slightly in advance, and the chief interest the affair had for me was in learning what new trickery Will was up to. But he shook me off, and so I let him lead me. The three men had come to a stand with their backs against a high wall, and with drawn swords ready, while the link-boy, unmindful of the curses of his employers, stood by with his praiseworthy persistence to illuminate the scene. As we drew near I saw Will pick up an ugly stone and throw it at him, but the boy dodged it quickly, and screamed back a demand for his pay as he retreated to a somewhat safer distance.

No word was spoken as we came upon them save an exclamation of ungodly character, which



fell from Will's pious lips as our familiar faces were revealed to him. Thrusting back his sword into its scabbard, he turned to his comrades with an ostentatious air of assurance.

"Men," he said, with one eye turned upward and the other upon ourselves for caution—"men, the arm of the Lord is mighty, and hath delivered us! These are friends!"

But Hal, with his head thrust into his shoulders like a bulldog, and a scowl upon his face that had done credit to His Grace, went so close to Will that his breath came hot upon him, and stood so for full a minute, looking him in the face.

"I suppose," he said, controlling himself with an effort, "that it is a sign of friendship to attempt the life of a man as he goes through the streets in his chair?"

"Nay, nay, Master Hal," the fellow replied with a ready impudence, "that surely would not prove it. But we are commanded to obey our masters, and it is my lord, not I, who must experience a change of heart. Ever since I met with your chair I have given humble thanks that Providence did see fit to deliver you out of His Grace's hand."

"Your way of thanksgiving is strange," Hal

answered slowly, "and yet perchance it is as righteous as my own, who just now was thankful that a chance at you at last was offered me. I pray I may not kill you, Will, for you helped to bury my poor father. Will you draw and see which of us is the better man?"

Will's two companions meanwhile had stood with gaping mouths awaiting their cue, but as my dear boy spoke they hastened to place themselves by Will's side. They were but grooms, however, and being little skilled in the art of fence, and having besides only their knives with which to defend themselves, I had little difficulty or danger in engaging them both. For, seeing no help for it, Will, at Hal's demand, had drawn his sword, and forthwith had made a furious cut with it in his friendly fashion. But he had less skill than energy with his weapon, and the next moment it had gone flying out of his hand, to fall at the feet of the link-boy, who still stood petrified with interest to give us light to fight by.

Seeing that Will was disarmed, Hal threw down his own rapier, and as he ran in upon his antagonist I heard him mutter, "Now let it be an honest punishment!"

For a moment I felt rather than saw, for my

attention was fully occupied with my own men, how the two reeled and tossed in each other's embrace, now one bearing the other down, now the other, so that it seemed an even matching, and then there rang out the sharp report of a pistol, and with a cry that pierced my heart like the ball itself, my dear boy fell to the ground. I saw Will spring past me, and like a flash I thrust at him as he ran and felt my sword touch quivering flesh; but he gave no sound of hurt, and by the time I reached Hal's side both he and his two companions had vanished in the darkness. The link-boy had started to follow, but I called to him that he might look to me for recompense, and so he came near and threw the light where I was gazing in bitter fear and trembling, for my boy had lain quite still in the road as he had fallen, and not even a groan had escaped his lips. I knelt beside him and pushed back his hair with a shaking hand, and found it soaked in blood. Tearing off his periwig, I discovered that the bullet had glanced along the top of his skull, ploughing a red furrow there which gave forth a steady stream of blood, stunning him as a mighty blow from a club would have done. He was breathing almost imperceptibly, and his

eyes were closed, yet so relieved and thankful was I to find him hurt no worse, that I could have danced for very joy about him and thought the action timely, but instead I tried my strength to better purpose. My dear boy had grown sadly thin and wan in these last months, and so to bear him in my arms, though he was so tall, was not too great a load for love to compass. I got my arms about him and lifted him as tenderly as I was able, and, with the assistance of the link going on before, started slowly for the Beare at the Bridge-foot, where I knew that help would be forthcoming. It was not far that I had to go, and upon our arrival the mistress, after some slight demur, admitted us, and showed the way to a room apart, where I laid Hal upon the bed. I then despatched my faithful link-boy to my Lord Duke's house with a message to Mr. Booker, begging him to come to us at the Beare, for I knew that he of all men could give me best assistance.

Rubbing his quiet hands, bathing his hurt, and striving to put life in at his feebly breathing mouth, doing all that I could to comfort him, I sat at my dear boy's side and waited for his eyes to open, while only the fitful breathing and the throbbing of his pulse gave me assur-

ance of life. Just as I had placed him did he lie, moving neither hand nor foot, and not even the quiver of an eyelash gave promise of returning consciousness. I watched and waited so for an hour, and then a slight stir in the house below gave me hope that Mr. Booker had at last arrived. So I covered Hal in his cloak and went down the stairs to bring our patron to him quickly.

In the room below, into which I came unsummoned and unannounced, I found a lady sitting, her face concealed by a mask, her shape hidden in a heavy mantle of fur. As I entered the room thus brusquely she started back with a sharp exclamation of surprise, and then, with an effort recovering herself, she turned away from me and went to a little window to stare out into the blackness of the night. With a word of apology for my intrusion, I stepped back into the passage, and there ran plump into the arms of a gentleman, who was making great haste along it toward the room I just had left. It was too dark for eyes to be of any use, excepting so far as dim outlines went, but a voice that was familiar cursed me as I stood aside to let him pass. I went out then into the little courtyard of the inn, and found in waiting there

a coach and six impatient horses with a groom or two attending. The lanthorns threw a dim light about, yet although the men were muffled in heavy cloaks, I could see, as the wind swung the folds of these about, that beneath was the well-known livery of His Grace of Richmond. And so I fell back into the shadow to watch, praying the good Lord to stay with my boy meanwhile, that I might know the end of this strange night. In a moment the door of the inn was thrown open, and the stream of light from within illuminated the progress of the lady, whose revery I had so rudely startled, to the waiting coach outside. The gentleman who had sworn at me in the passage followed close behind her, and both were swallowed in the darkness of the carriage. Then the grooms sprang lightly to their places, the post-boys gave a muffled shout, and the coach rumbled heavily away. As I stood staring after it, someone touched me on the arm, and, turning quickly, I met Mr. Booker's kind eyes bent upon me. I know not why it was, but as I felt their calm, earnest gaze, the weight of all that I had borne and contemplated since the morning seemed to fall like a shell from off me, and I drew a long breath of deep relief and thankfulness.

"Oh, sir," I cried, "will you come to Hal? What do these others matter?"

We went in and up the stair, with his hand for comfort resting on my shoulder, and as we went I told him something of what had happened to us. Together we came to Hal's bedside and looked down upon his quiet face, whereon had come no sign of life, and listened to his laboured breath, while fear rose grimly in my heart to see him lie so long like this.

"There is no occasion for uneasiness, John," Mr. Booker said gently. "The boy is badly stunned—that is all. We will get him away from here as soon as it is morning. I knew it would come—I knew it would come, though I looked for it less quickly."

This last he muttered to himself as he bent over my boy and examined with the skill of a clever surgeon the ugly parting through his hair.

"Sir, if you knew," I cried, "why did you not warn us?"

He straightened himself and looked at me with that kindly light in his eye that ever rebuked my vehemence.

"A warning would not have saved him, John," he said, "and who knows that this may

not prove a blessing in disguise ? Let us look for that and have no other thought."

"Sir, I think it is easier said than done," I answered.

He looked at me with a smile.

"I am a bit of a surgeon, John," he said, "and I give you my assurance that no harm will come of this. We will be content to wait a little, though now you may bring me hot water and some cloths if you will."

I went away in gladness at having some occupation given me, and had presently the whole inn in a bustle to provide me with these articles, while the good mistress herself made bandages of linen, and prepared a goodly cordial for Hal against his awakening. When I returned to Mr. Booker with the things he had required, he met me at the door to take them and to give me further courage that all was going well.

"John," he said to me, "will you trust the boy to me for an hour or two ? I think he will sleep for a little longer time, and I have a message which you can best be bearer of. Will you go and trust me, John ?"

I answered readily yes, for I knew that Hal could have no safer hands about him, and I was more at rest when I could at the same time be



active. Our patron then directed me to search out a certain house in Drury Lane, taking with me a token which I was to give to a lady who would come to me there at mention of his name. And this lady I was to bring back with me to the Beare with what speed I could obtain.

It was just beginning to grow light with the first grey of morning as I once again set out upon this new undertaking, and I made my way through the empty streets with a good speed and certainty, having no difficulty in coming to the house for which I was bound. To gain admittance, however, was less easy. Six times I knocked and waited vainly, and had nearly concluded that no one remained within, when, upon the seventh trial, on which my whole strength was expended, an old man thrust his head from an upper window and ordered me in no gentle tones to take myself off. This command was accompanied by a bucket full of dirty water, which, by the exercise of no little agility, I was so fortunate as to escape as far as my person went, though it did much to whet my anger. My crusty assailant after this act of courtesy had immediately withdrawn his head, banging the window to, so I once again

made assault upon the knocker with energy renewed. But having kept up this mighty rap-tap vainly for some minutes more, my anger became thoroughly aroused, and I went out into the street, and, picking up a stone, tossed it, along with a goodly oath, through the window above. This happily had some quick effect, for I heard an answering curse from within as the window once more framed my assailant's head, and in another minute a shower of missiles began to rain upon me, intermingled with screams for the watch and maledictions, while people in the surrounding houses threw open windows to see what all this noise portended. As the old man did not disappear this time, however, I took my chance to shout to him that I bore word from Mr. Booker which demanded his immediate attention and obedience. At this he once more withdrew his head, though I still could see him standing, and seemed to hold animated colloquy with someone near, and presently another figure took his place and leaned out to look at me.

"Is it you, Master John?" said a voice that made me jump. "Is it you? Then, pray, let me hear you laugh that I run no risk of deception."

Indeed, it was not difficult, for such relief had I at hearing her through this dim light of morning, that no other proceeding had seemed so natural, and I set up a peal that brought more neighbours out, and cried in answer:

“And is it you, sweet Mistress Penelope? Then will you let me in, since I am come in search of you?”

“Your laugh is less gay than formerly, Master John,” she replied, “though even so no other lips could produce it. And so your identity proven, sir, I will have you come nearer before I hear what you have to tell me.”

With this she disappeared, and presently I heard the bolts of the door slip back, and then it was held open by my crusty water-thrower, who sullenly motioned me to enter. So I went in to the little dark passageway, and there a soft hand was laid upon my arm.

“Master John, what is your urgent business? Is there anything wrong with my father?” she whispered.

I hastened to assure her of his safety. “But he hath need of you, sweet mistress,” I said, “and so, I think, have we all. Here is a token which he hath sent to you, with request that you will come to him.”

She took it from my hand and hastened with it to the door, which the surly householder still was holding partly open as invitation for my exit. In the light thus gained she scrutinised the ring I had brought to her, and quickly turned to me with a cry of astonishment.

“What means this, Master John?” she exclaimed. “This is the ring young Henry Stuart gave to me the day he sailed away for the Colonies! My father would not let me wear it for fear it might come to bear for me too deep a meaning, forgetting that even a child’s heart must remember some things. And so he took it from me until my boy sweetheart should come to me again. What does this mean, then, Master John? What does it mean, think you?”

An eager light of wistfulness shone upon me from her eyes, and her dainty brows were drawn together in anxious waiting for my answer.

“Dear lady,” I said, taking her two hands in one of mine, “I know little to-night of sweet-hearts, for my dearest boy is hurt and needs us. Will you come with me to help him?”

She drew away her hands and turned quickly toward the stair.

“Surely we waste time!” she cried. “Wait

but a moment, sir, while I fetch my cloak, and then we will make haste together!"

But I could not take her on foot through the streets at that hour, and so while she made ready I ran to the nearest inn, and found a hackneyman, who, after some difficulty, provided me with a rumbling coach, a driver, and a sorry pair of nags, and with these I returned to find Mistress Penelope awaiting me in some impatience. Thus did we at last set out together for the Bridge-foot.

"Master John," she said to me, "let us not speak at all if you please, for I want this time for thinking."

And so we went in silence, while in the growing light I watched the speculation in her sea-deep eyes, and sighed within my soul for pity to think that Hal could not remember.

In the Beare yard we found the mistress waiting to do kindness to my sweet companion, until our arrival should be made known to Mr. Booker, and I ran to tell him of it, since I could no longer wait for news of my dear boy. As I opened the door an exclamation of relief and gratitude escaped me, for I saw that Hal's eyes were open. Mr. Booker was bending over him, and as I entered motioned me to approach in

quietness, looking so gravely at me that the fear once more struck coldly at my heart.

“What is it, sir?” I whispered. “Is he not yet awake?”

“Look at him, John,” he answered. “Have you ever seen him thus before?”

I took the place he had occupied, and looked into my dear boy's eyes. Had I seen him thus? Ah, how it all came back to me! The cuddy of the little “Steadfast,” the pretty boy with the great periwig falling about him, the stark figure behind him, the very cold that had fallen suddenly upon me as I had looked into those staring, unseeing eyes. I cannot tell what words I used, but I know that I threw myself upon my knees beside the bed and prayed the good God to spare my boy, and put my face close to his and called him sweet, endearing names, smoothing back his hair as gently as my rough hand could. And when he saw me not, nor heard nor answered by a single sigh, I turned to Mr. Booker in a kind of angry frenzy, and demanded of him, with the salt sea welling in my eyes, if it was thus that he fulfilled his promise that no harm would come of Will Hanley's villainy.

And for the hundredth time he shamed my

hotness with his calm tolerance and sympathy.

"Courage, John," he said; "even now there is no need of fear. All will be well, I promise you. But tell me now how you succeeded in the errand you went upon? Is my sweet Pe— below?"

I told him sullenly yes, and as I turned again to Hal he softly left the room. How long he was away I have no means of knowing, but presently, as I knelt in my mad anxiety over Hal's staring eyes, a light touch fell upon my shoulder, and a voice said softly:

"Will you not let me see my old playfellow, Master John?"

Now, perchance the greatest shame in my life was in the moment that followed. I know not what demon of jealousy took possession of me, and made me hold my place so when one with a prior right requested it. But this weak behaviour I must plead guilty to, and confess that some other thought than thanksgiving welled within my heart when, at sound of that sweet voice, I saw those eyelids, which my love could not stir, quiver and partly fall, and then once more set widely open.

"May I not come for a moment, John?" she

said again, and this time I saw my littleness, and sprang aside in hearty scorn of it. As she took the place thus tardily made vacant for her, I saw with a pang how her sweet face was flushed with the sudden knowledge of this thing that had come to her, and that her eyes held all they could of tears. We watched, her father with a sadness in his face that was unusual there, and I in tense anxiety, as she bent over my dear boy and laid her hand in pity upon his bandaged hair.

"Oh, my dear, my dear," I heard her murmur, "that you should come back to me like this! Henry, Henry, have you forgot me then, have you quite forgot?"

A sob came in her throat, and another clutched my own, and then as we watched I saw Hal's body shiver, as if a mighty chill had seized it while his breath caught in a long, quivering sigh. Slowly, then, his eyelids fell, and when I had freed my own of the mist that covered them I looked again, and saw that his once more were open, and that in them was shining the light of knowledge and of glad surprise and love and sweet remembrance. With a mighty effort he put up his hand and looked at it, and drew it slowly across his eyes and



rubbed them, and half fearfully, as though he feared its vanishing, gazed up into the face that was leaning over his and finally reached out and touched it. And then he made a struggle to lift himself and cried :

“ Pen, Pen, have I come back already ? ”

She knelt beside him and took his hands and held them, saying no word in answer save those in the silent yearning of her face.

“ John, will you come with me a little ? ” Mr. Booker whispered, and so we two went out together.

## CHAPTER XX.

FOR the whole of one long day I waited without sight of my dear boy, waited with a dread upon me lest in the memory of his former life he should have forgotten all that had come after. Outside his door I sat, while from time to time my sweet mistress or her father came out to comfort me with news of how strongly his health was returning, and how he would talk and question them, though never a word of John. But at nightfall, as I sat with head in hands and thoughts of bitterness eating at my heartstrings, that light touch fell again upon my shoulder.

“Come, Master John,” she said, “you must not forget your way of laughing. There is no man in the world that hath three truer friends to love him than yourself, and these three are my father, young Harry Stuart, and my humble self. Would you like to hear a little story that hath just been told me? Yes? Well, it is a somewhat meagre tale, but I think you already know its sequel. Your Hal hath been

telling me, John, how, as the ship in which his father took him to seek their new home, after a long and weary voyage, drew near the land at last, a storm swept down upon them suddenly, driving their vessel far, far to northward of her course, and how her boats were stove and ruined by this tempest. Her rigging, too, was injured, so that after a day or two of this they had drifted helplessly, and then, when the lull had come to give them time for breathing, a new and even greater calamity had overtaken them, for fire broke out in the ship's hold, and no effort could gain accession over it. The captain of the vessel, when he saw all hope of safety for his ship was over, came to his passenger, and for the sake of his young son offered him the one remaining chance of safety. And for the boy's sake, Mr. Stuart, as he was plainly called, accepted it. Among the things he had brought with him from England was a tiny boat, the 'Penelope,' which he had thought to use for pleasure in the still Virginia waters. It would hold but two with the slightest chance of safety, and into this frail craft the gentleman and his little son were lowered by the bravest crew the sea hath ever fostered. Listen, then, Master John. Your dear young gentleman tells

me that after this his memory grows confused, and that he knows dimly how his father struggled with the oars while the cold crept down upon them. And then, he says, he can tell no more, save that someone was very good to him, 'John,' he said, and looked about to find you."

And so with a rush of joy through my veins, so great that I scarcely could contain it, I went in to my dear boy's bedside, and saw his eyes light up in gladness to see my long familiar face. What words we used I cannot set down, because I have no remembrance of them, but I know that we sat late and talked of all that had befallen us together in the Colony up to the time of our setting forth upon our quest. But this we did not mention; only, as once or twice we approached it, Hal's hand had tightened upon my own, while my sweet mistress, who held possession of his other one, made haste to lead our talk in some new direction. And when I beheld the light in my dear boy's face as his eyes turned towards her, and saw that his greatest trouble had been forgot in this return to consciousness, I fell to wondering if Betty ever dreamed of me.

But this state of quiet could not for long con-

tinue. With the next morning Hal awoke with scarcely a pain in his head and only a giddiness when he tried to rise, that kept him quietly upon his back, though sadly rebellious. Mr. Booker meanwhile had been to my Lord Duke's house, to take news of us to Her Grace should she be willing to receive it. But he had found her unforgiving, and indeed determined to have no more to do with us. My lord was at Whitehall, and on his return to the Beare Mr. Booker had stopped there to take leave of him, since it was his intention to take us to his house at Havant as soon as Hal could sit upon a horse. And Whitehall he had found in a ferment of excitement over the news of Miss Stewart's elopement with His Grace of Richmond, which, according to the popular report, had taken place a night or two before from the Beare at the Bridge-foot. So angry was His Majesty that he had shut himself in his apartments, and would see not even his ministers, while my Lord of Clarendon, who was suspected of complicity in the affair, had taken his departure from London, and even my Lady Castlemaine was reported to have fled. Mr. Booker gave me his news in private, and then went in to Hal, not knowing what to tell him.

But Hal himself saved us all trouble of procrastination in mistaken kindness. We found him lying with a grave look upon his dear young face, and as we entered, Mistress Penelope, who had been sitting beside him in our absence, quietly arose and left the room.

"I have been thinking, sir," said he to Mr. Booker, "that with your approval and John's, I should like to send a message somewhere."

Our patron nodded his encouragement, and I having followed his example, Hal continued soberly :

"The message is to him whom I now know is my uncle, sir, His Grace of Richmond. It is my wish now more than ever to assure him that I shall never give him cause for anxiety. You, sir, who were my father's friend, know how little value he gave to all that the title meant to him, and how he taught me, too, to have no love for it. We took leave of Cobham Hall for ever, we two, when we set sail for the Virginias, and I never wish to go there more, and there is but one thing which puzzles me. Why, sir, since you knew so well my father's will in this matter and my own as well, did you do so much towards restoring me to what are, perchance, my rights?"

"Hal, how could I know before I saw your face again," Mr. Booker answered, "how adventure and strange lands might have changed you? It was but just that the choice of life should again be offered you, and though I had faith in your allegiance to your upbringing from the time you came to me at Havant, still for my sweet Pen's sake I wished to prove you."

The look of sadness was in his face again as he spoke, and this time I thought I knew the reason for it, and my heart was sorry for him when I felt how much he loved her.

"Then you have no objection to my message, sir?" Hal asked.

I waited with some curiosity for Mr. Booker's answer, not knowing how he would tell my boy what he just had told myself. For a moment he did not reply, and then he turned to Hal with his quiet smile and said:

"To the message I have no objection, Hal, though where you will send it so that it will quickly reach His Grace I cannot advise you."

"I was thinking," Hal answered simply, "of giving it into the hands of Miss Stewart at Clarendon House."

"And even that I fear would fail, my boy," our patron said cheerily, "since I am told that

both Miss Stewart and His Grace are missing this morning."

For a space that seemed interminable, though by time it measured little, no one spoke, and my boy lay gazing quietly upward at the ceiling, and then he turned his eyes upon myself and held out his hand to me.

"I think she struggled hard to do me kindness, John," he said. "I should like in turn to be the cause of some little happiness to herself. She gained a promise from me which she also promised to return when my memory should come to me. Thanks to our friend Will it hath come somewhat sooner than she thought probable, and now I should like to assure her that her title is still secure. I have been telling Pen about Miss Stewart, John. She hath a certain beauty and a charm which, I fear, my noble uncle will do little to enhance. Yes, she hath beauty and a heart as well, poor lady! I wish she had a better man to love her, though no sane man, perhaps, would venture it. And so I will send my message to her. Which way have they gone, John?"

I told him that we had no means of knowing, and begged him that he trouble himself no further for them, but he would not be satisfied,



and insisted that we try to discover whither the fugitives had flown, and this was what no one could tell us.

A full week we lay at the Beare before Hal was well enough to travel, but at the end of that time we set out one morning for Mr. Booker's home. In London we took leave of no one save young Mr. Jermyn, who came to call upon us at the Bridge-foot with his arm still bandaged and his tongue as blithe as ever, and of my Lord of Albemarle, upon whom we waited at the Admiralty, to thank him for all his bounty to us. Her Grace, much to my sorrow and even more to Hal's, cherished her resentment towards him to the last, and returned the penitent message he sent to her with some quite unnecessary abuse. As for His Majesty, we made no effort to gain an audience with him, hearing how he still was sulking over the way Miss Stewart had tricked him, and being but too glad to escape so unobserved and unquestioned.

Mr. Booker and myself set out on horseback, while Hal rode in the coach with Mistress Penelope, who sometimes deserted him to mount behind her father or myself; and we waved farewell to London with no feeling of regret.

So gay was Hal that scarcely could I recognise my boy, for his spirit seemed to imbibe new life and his body health with every step of the journey. A soft colour came into his face and lighted it, so that the very hollowness of his cheeks appeared to vanish, and even his bandages were worn becomingly. But above all was it a joy to see, now that the old, sad puzzle had left them, the clearness of his eyes as they followed his sweet mistress about, dancing with answering merriment as she laughed at his laziness from her perch behind John Hadder, softening with the tenderness of love awakened as she came again to her place beside him, saddening sometimes, too, as they talked in low tones of their childish play together and of the strange years which had come between. A pleasant journey we had in the cheery springtime, for though the frost that year had bided late, still as we rode southward the primroses were peeping at us from the fields on either side, and a warm air blew softly from the far-off sea. It was just as we had passed Leatherhead by a mile or two, and were looking forward to a comfortable supper in our patron's own hospitable hall, that suddenly a little black horse sprang upon us from a sharp turning of the

road, and his rider drew graceful rein beside our cavalcade, standing with head bent low and hat in hand upon his pommel.

“Good-day, M. Duval,” said Mr. Booker with the friendliness he had for all men alike. “Though you come so suddenly upon us, yet from your courtesy I gather it is kindness brings you and no business this time.”

“Monsieur guesses partly right and partly wrong, as is the way with those who make attempt to read the future,” the Frenchman answered quickly. “My business lies not with your purses nor with this sweet lady’s jewels, though she bore ten thousand pounds’ worth with her. But, instead, I have a word to say to this friendly helper of mine if monsieur will have patience.” He turned to me with a bow, and dexterously brought his little beast up beside my own.

“Monsieur will no doubt remember how in our last encounter he put me upon the track of a certain lady in whom I had great interest. Now, though I know not how he may value it, I am able to return the information. This lady hath gone, monsieur, to Cobham Hall, in Kent, and should His Grace of Richmond ever cross the path of Claude Duval, he will find him more

skillful even with the sword than with the whip. Messieurs and mademoiselle, I have the happiness to wish you a safe arrival and a long and happy life."

He turned his horse sharply, and with a spring was gone again up the cross-road before we could make reply. We never saw him more, though in after years we heard how he was finally taken at the "Hole in the Wall," in Chandos Street, and how a lady pleaded for his life before Judge Morton, but pleaded vainly.

In Havant we settled quietly to spend the summer, until my dear boy's hurt should quite have healed and his strength and natural healthfulness of mind and body be in full returned to him. And when this should have been compassed, we thought to return once more to our old life in the Colony, taking with us a treasure far greater than any we had sought or hoped for—namely, sweet Mistress Penelope herself.

"Long have I known that I must part with her when you came," our patron had answered sadly when Hal went to ask his blessing on their hopes, "though I had prayed that you might stay with me here in England. But the Colony hath more to offer a young man with no birthright save his own two hands, and I give

you my little Pen in deference to the will that hath appointed it, though there is no other man on whom I could bestow her freely."

We tried our best to induce him to bear us company, but unavailingly, for his work lay still in England, he assured us, and so my sweet mistress for the first time learned the sorrow that even joy can know. To my lord at Cobham, Hal forthwith had sent his message, and then for two weeks we waited eagerly for the messenger's return. What Hal expected from it I knew not, but for myself, I had a fear that His Grace, learning so our whereabouts, might still believe his safest course to lie in compassing my boy's destruction, and every skulking stranger filled me with a vile suspicion. But, as often happens in cases in general, and in all wherein madam had been concerned, no one of us guessed rightly what course would be selected towards us. Our messenger returned upon the fifteenth day, bearing with him a packet which was addressed in a fair hand to "Our Well-beloved Kinsman, Mr. Henry Stuart, at Havant," and Hal, upon breaking the seal, found within a lengthy document, which he approached with no little temerity. He spread it upon a table while Mistress Penelope stood

with her hand upon his shoulder, waiting with her father and myself for explanation.

"The writing is very cramped and clerkly," Hal said finally. "I fear I do not read it rightly, sir. Will you not decipher it for me?"

He gave his place to Mr. Booker, and straightened himself, with his face flushed and a look in it of surprise and doubtful pleasure.

"Why, Hal, this is no less than a deed of gift!" Mr. Booker exclaimed. "It conveys to you certain lands and properties in the Virginias, a large estate, I judge, from the boundaries here set down, and the same no doubt which was granted by his late Majesty to your grandfather, and which your own dear father so longed to see and occupy."

"Sir," cried Hal, "I accept no bounty from His Grace of Richmond!"

He started forward, stretching out his hand for the document, as if it were his purpose then and there to destroy it, but I laid a restraining hand upon his arm, while my sweet mistress clung to him and said laughingly, though the tears were in her eyes:

"Hal, Hal, my dear, you shall do nothing hastily! To me the Virginias hath a warmer sound than hath the Massachusetts Colony."

Together we tried to persuade him that this much of his possessions he might take with honour, while Mistress Penelope, taking the document in her hands, stood reading the contents over. Suddenly she turned to Hal with a little cry.

"Did this escape you?" she exclaimed. "See, Hall, did you see this writing?"

We all looked where her finger pointed, and there was a line of finer penmanship, like that upon the outer packet. Mistress Penelope in her sweet voice read it for me:

"Frances Stewart, now by the generosity of a most noble gentleman, Duchess of Richmond, entreats this gentleman that he do her the added favour of taking as much of his rightful estate and heritage as the deed herein contained doth mention."

"And now, Hal," said Mistress Pen, with mock severity, "let me see if you can refuse a favour which two women beg of you; and if you can, how shall I ever hope to manage you?"

Hal raised his head and held out his hands to her.

"For your sake, then, will I do this thing since you wish it, sweetheart," he said, "and because I would not take you hence—a beggar!"

"Oh, Hal, my dear, as if it mattered," she cried as she went close to him, and then, with the tears still coquetting with the smile upon her lips, she turned to me.

"John, do you think me mercenary that I wish honour and lands and somewhat of the credit that belongs to him, to rest upon my husband? Is it a grasping spirit that I have in this matter, think you? For your single opinion, Master John, is worth as much as that of a dozen other men combined, since only a man of most uncommon honesty could laugh so."

"Indeed, Mistress Penelope," I replied, "should you persuade Hal to take all that belongs to him, there is no one in my opinion could become my Lady Duchess with more compliment to the title than yourself."

"Ah, John, half of you was meant for the court and the other half for nature," she laughed. "But listen, all of you. Were you, my dear lord"—and here she swept Hal a graceful courtesy—"were you to acquire more of your estate than this Virginia portion which I covet, to do so you must love it more than you love your sweetheart, for so great a weight of possession she could not bear."

And so did my boy become a plain Virginia



gentleman with his greatest happiness assured.

Meanwhile we settled for a little quiet life until the autumn should start us upon our homeward journey, and then it was that I began to feel the pain of loneliness. For although Hal seemed determined that I should know no difference in his heart towards me now that he had bestowed it upon another, and although my sweet mistress made so great a pet of me and said that she knew not which she loved the most, her Hal or plain John Hadder, still I felt a longing at my heart for something and a strangeness that made me wish sometimes for solitude, even while most I wanted company. And I set down the thing that happened now in a spirit of thanksgiving to One who can provide such joy for us. One midday, when I had stolen out into the shady lane, where once I had had my tumble from M. Duval's little "Beauty," I seated myself upon a stone to meditate. Hal and his sweetheart had strolled, as I thought, in a contrary direction, while Mr. Booker was among his books and instruments in the watch-tower above. How long I sat I cannot tell, but presently something made me look up, and there in front of me, with hands

behind her and eyes regarding me with a lively interest, stood Mistress Penelope.

"Master John," she said, "what do you think I have behind my back?"

I told her I could not guess, unless perchance it might be Hal, since I saw him nowhere and she long had twisted him about her finger.

"Oh, no," she answered gaily. "I am rid of Master Hal for a little, and indeed I am sadly jealous just at present, for he hath found someone else to interest him while I am quite deserted. So now, if you will, try another guess at what I have behind me."

To humour her (for I saw that something was in the wind) I guessed a number of things, from Tom, the hound, to a letter from His Majesty summoning me to become Lord Chancellor, but still she laughed delightedly and shook her head.

"Though I doubt not that His Majesty's realm would prosper much under your guidance, still you are wrong," she said. "The thing I have was once of great importance to you, John, but now it is nothing but a treasured keepsake. It hath come a long journey, only to find that its usefulness is over, and soon to take the journey back again."

But even with this help I was too stupid to guess, and so my sweet mistress took pity upon me and laid upon my knees the sword which we had left in Governor Bellingham's keeping. I drew it wonderingly from the scabbard, and instinctively looked for the scratches of which my lady had told me, upon the hilt, and found them there. And Mistress Pen meanwhile watched in silence, though, as I learned presently, with great impatience.

"Dear me," she cried at last, "a sword is much like a sword, I fancy, but it cannot cross the wide ocean of itself! Have you no wish to learn who brought it, John?"

"Your father told me long ago that he had sent for it," I said, though with little interest. "Perhaps it was one of His Excellency's serving-men?"

"I have a mind to punish your indifference," she said, with a little frown, "and yet, on second thoughts—John, you are lonely sometimes? Come, we will take a little stroll together if you will."

She held out her hand, and I put the blade into its scabbard and rose to follow her. Down the lane she led me swiftly, until we reached the door in the garden wall, through which we

had entered together that night which seemed now so long ago. And then, as she paused to fit the key into its lock, my heart of a sudden began to flutter strangely, and I put up my hand to hold it. Mistress Penelope opened the door and gave me a gentle shove so that my feet went trippingly over the sill. Then she pulled the door to and locked it again behind me, and I heard the sweet ripple of her laughter outside the wall. With that strange tumult at my heart, I raised my eyes half-fearfully to look about the garden and saw no one, for though I heard a soft breathing behind me, yet I wanted courage to look around. And then from the sweet silence someone whispered softly, "John!" and with a great cry I turned and clasped her in my arms—my own, my very sweetheart, my dear, my Betty!

Some words we said I could set down, but indeed I will not, and no one hath the right to ask it of me. Only will I say that there are times when words serve little purpose of expression, and when the repetition of them would be an insult to the heart; and in this I know that all who have felt the force of love will agree with me.

But afterwards, when that first glad time was

over, though time meant nothing to us then, my Betty told me how it happened, and this I must explain.

“ And how handsome you are grown, John ! ” she began, to return the compliment I just had given her. “ And to think how I have grieved all through these months to think that you were drowned ! How could you be so forgetful ? ”

“ How could I know that villain Hanley’s boat would take upon itself to go home with its keel aloft ? ” I answered. “ And yet it seems that sorrow hath not stolen your roses either, Mistress Betty. ”

“ Nay, John, you should have seen me ! You forget how long a voyage I have had since I got news of your safety, and what an appetite the sea and joy will give one ! ”

And then she told all that had occurred since that last night of ours together, and a sorrowful time my poor dear had had of it. For, besides the pain of my loss (since Will’s boat returned to port alone and bottom upward), another sad thing had come to her. Late in the spring her mother had caught the fever, and the force of it had been too great for even her resistance. And so was my dearest Betty left alone with only her little cottage, as she

thought, for property, and for kin a sister who dwelt far off in England. When Mr. Booker's messenger arrived, therefore, and failed to gain possession of the sword he had been sent for, since His Excellency refused to give it to a stranger, he had proceeded at once to my old home, where our kind patron, with his usual forethought, had directed him to seek out my Betty. And Betty, in her delight at knowledge of my safety, might have been able to wheedle the devil out of his tail had need for this arisen. To Boston and His Excellency she had gone, and having importuned him successfully, there had come over her a longing to see someone who belonged to her in kinship, and she had given what money she had for passage, and started to pay a visit to her sister. It was lucky, indeed, for me that her ship had come to harbour at Portsmouth, and that Mr. Booker's messenger, who accompanied her, had been able to prevail upon her to rest a little at his master's house before proceeding on her journey, else might she again have missed her John, and I the sweetest pleasure of my life.

"Our Hal I should scarce have known," said Betty, "so changed his dear face is, John! And yet a happier one I have never seen, un-

less it is your own or that of Hal's sweet lady. To think that she should so long have been his sweetheart, and that he could ever have forgotten. It is a strange story, but it hath, I think, a happy ending."

And so, indeed, it had, and hath ever had since these things took place now long ago.

All through that summer we stayed in England, for now that my dear had come to me the yearning in my heart was stilled, and there was naught to hasten our departure. In the first of the soft September days our old friend, Mr. Baxter, came to Havant, and there in the little church were Hal and his sweet mistress married, while Betty and myself stood quietly behind them and said over the responses when they had finished. And when the brown leaves were falling over the land, and the sea with its autumnal blueness beckoned us once more to meet its soft embrace, I hastened my dear on board the good ship that was to bear us to our far-off home that she might not see the pain of parting between our sweet mistress and her father. But for her comfort and for ours as well, Mr. Booker promised that when his work in England was done he would visit our Virginia estate (for Hal would have it "ours"),

and this promise, indeed, he kept before many years had passed.

And so while Betty and myself were happy in our smaller home, my dear boy and his sweet mistress built their great house in this fair New World of ours, and here, in the zeal of founding a noble family to come after him, did Hal forget all pride in predecessors save alone his father. And when, after five years of happiness, with work and plans and pleasure plenty, a letter came from Her Grace of Richmond, to tell us that her lord was dead and without issue, the news brought no disturbance with it, since she had no more to offer us than we already had. Of Hal's marriage I think she had no knowledge, for she used strange terms in begging him now to put forth his rightful claim, but my boy and his dear lady were too content to change their happiness for something unfamiliar, and so, for want of an heir, the title which was Hal's, reverted to the Crown, and in a month or two was bestowed upon a bastard. And of Her Grace we heard no more save indirectly.

What end overtook Will Hanley we never learned, for after that night, when he so unwittingly restored Hal's memory, he crossed our path no more, and so we could not even thank



him. Yet sometimes when I thought of it I felt again the quiver of his flesh as my sword had met it, and wondered if, after all, my hand had not been the instrument of his punishment.

In our second Virginian summer, from some handsome wood cut in his own forest, Hal and I made a wonderful chair. We had the cunningest workmen in the country finish it, and it was cushioned with the finest satin our London merchant could provide. This Hal sent as a peace-offering to my Lady Duchess of Albemarle, but to our sorrow it came to her while her lord lay in state at Somerset House, and as His Grace but opened the door of eternity that his lady might follow after, we never knew if she had forgiven us.

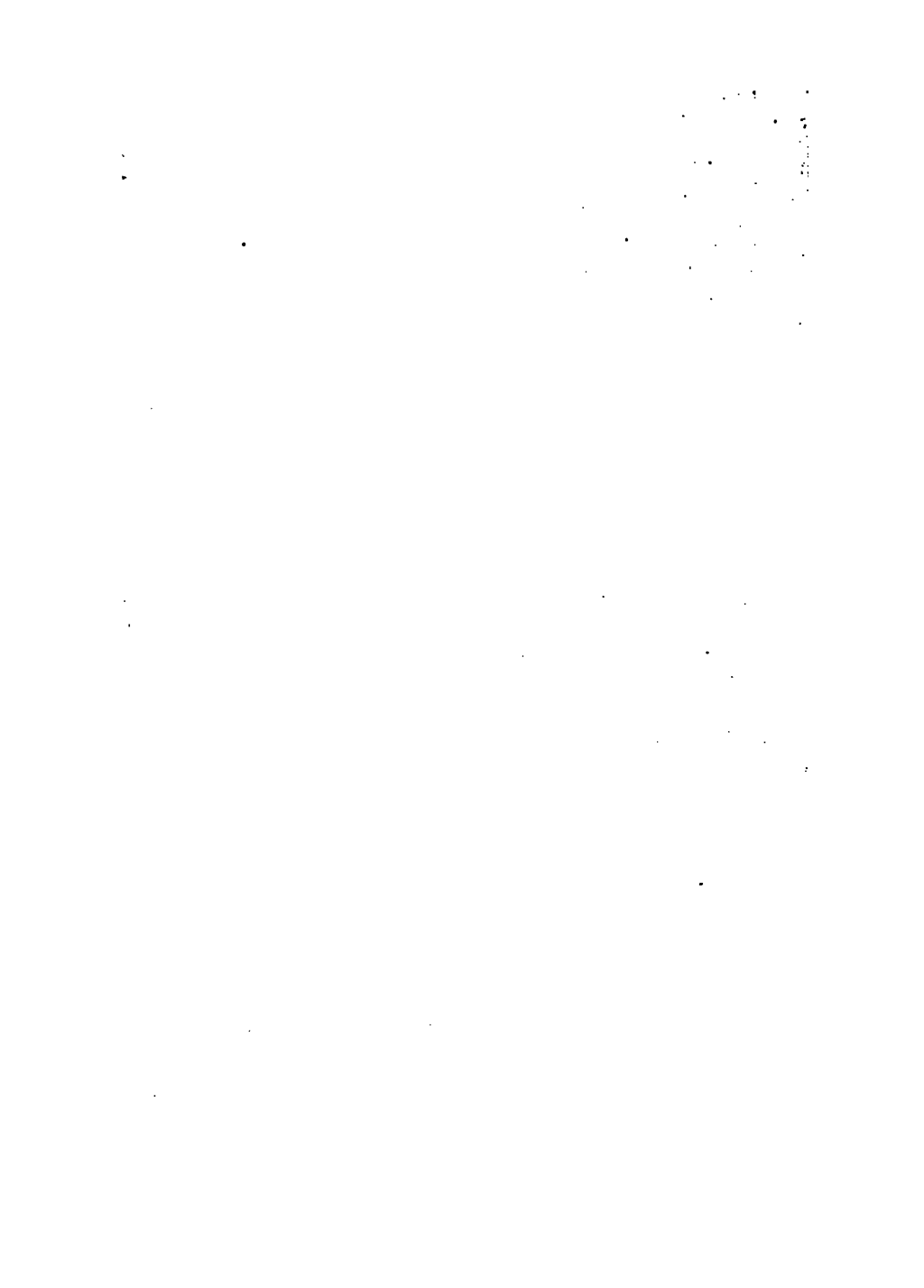
I think no sweeter or more comely children have been born into the world than the three that came to Hal and his Penelope, not excepting even my own sturdy son, though Betty will not hear this.

"And how fortunate it is, John," Hal sometimes says to me as we talk our story over, "that there are no boys among them, for now I have not to think that perhaps my heir would have liked to be called 'His Grace.' Truly, John, all things are managed for us."

I will not say, "Here is an end," for no ending can ever touch my happiness. Still I have no more to tell that would interest any save my loved ones, and to them is already known all that fortune hath brought us since we came to our new home. And in charity I take my leave of you who have come with us thus far, and, with my hand in Betty's, bow my thanks to you with a finer courtesy than ever Whitehall taught me.

w. v. . . .







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